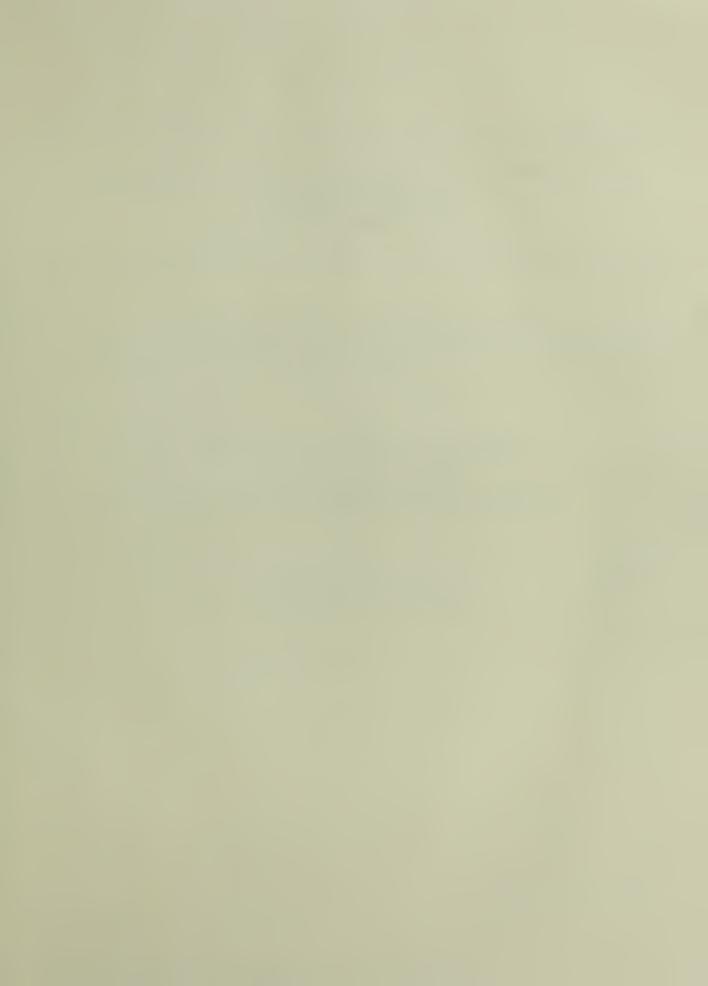# ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAMS IN THE COMMONWEALTH:
A REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION

A Research Report Presented to the
Massachusetts Education Reform Review Commission
March 2000

By
The Center for Education Policy
School of Education
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

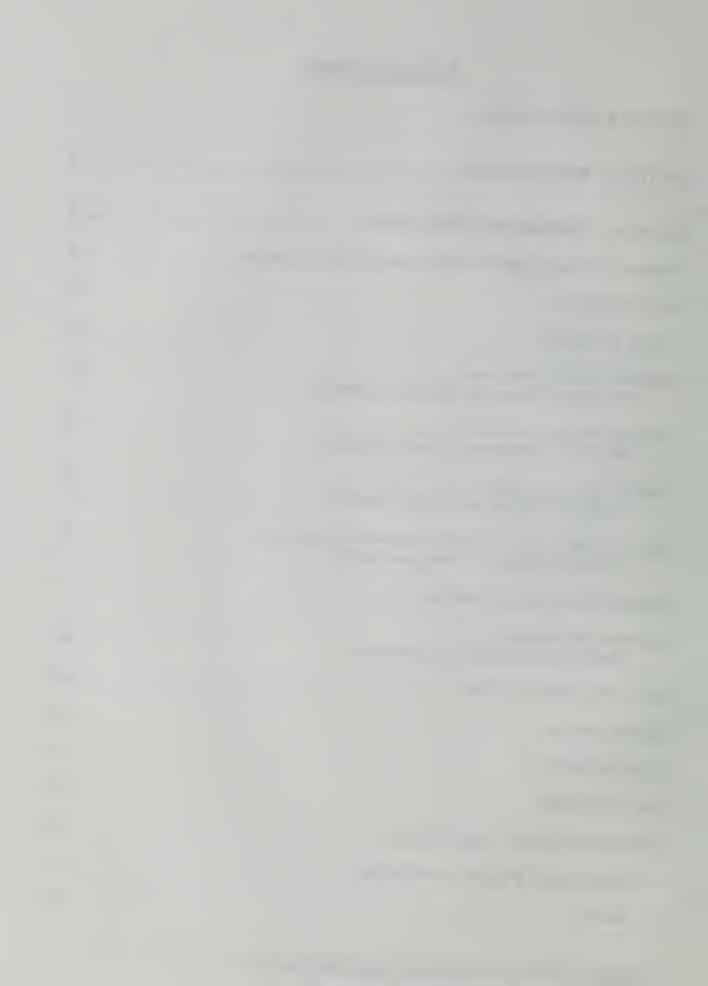## John R. Schneider
Principal Investigator

http://www.massedreformreview.org/research/acadss.html

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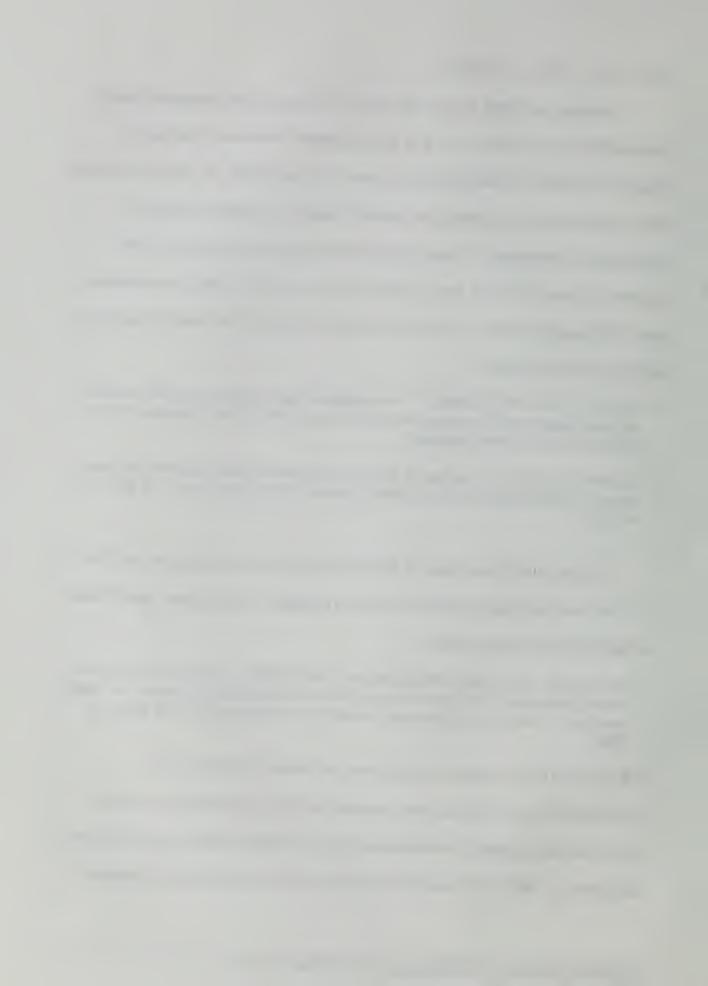
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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The fiscal year 1999 state budget of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts provided $20 million in new funding to school districts "to develop or enhance academic support for students scoring in level 1 or 2 on MCAS, or…for students who have been identified as needing improvement based on locally administered standardized assessment." These grants funded programs that were primarily academic in focus. The line item (Chapter 194 of the Acts of 1998, the state fiscal year 1999 budget, line item 7061-9404) provided funding for two types of academic support services programs:

➢ SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAMS: These state-funded academic support services programs extended the school day and included after school, Saturday school, and/or vacation school programs;

➢ SUMMER SCHOOL: Half-day or full-day academic support services programs offered to students during the summer vacation period (late June, July and August).

In addition the Department of Education (DOE) used funding from the line item to launch the Individual Reading and Tutoring Program. This program was initiated by the Board of Education (BOE).

➢ INDIVIDUAL TUTORING AND READING PROGRAMS: Targeted one-on-one tutoring programs for 4th grade students who scored in the "pre-reader" or "basic" category on the grade 3 state Iowa reading test administered in the spring of 1998.
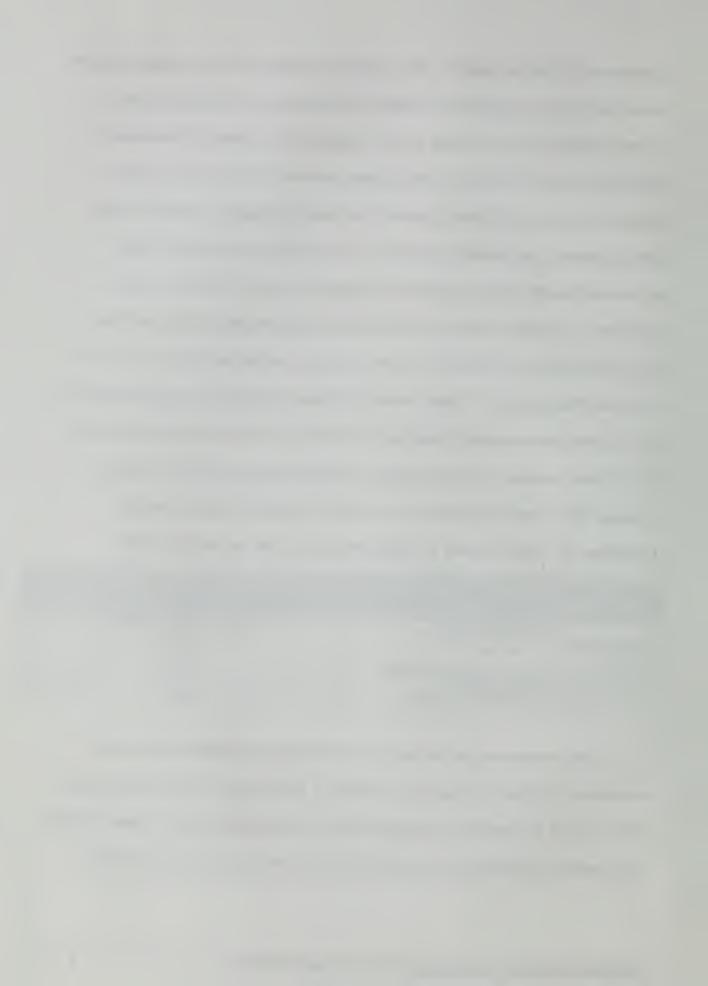
DOE received 605 separate proposals from 247 school districts in the Commonwealth to provide academic support services programs (school year or summer school programs) to students during 1998/1999 academic year and during the summer of 1999. DOE approved funding for 317 academic support services

programs in 202 school districts. DOE approved funding for 28 individual tutoring in reading programs. Funds were provided to all types of school districts in the Commonwealth, including charter schools. Appendix A provides a list of school districts that received funding to offer students state-funded academic support services programs and individual tutoring and reading programs during the 1998-1999 academic year, including summer. Two hundred school districts offered students either after school, individual tutoring and reading, or summer school programs. Two districts offered only the individual tutoring and reading program. Two districts received funding for academic support services programs but did not implement their program. Table 1 below provides a breakdown of funded program by type. Grants were awarded through a competitive grant process managed by DOE. DOE officials worked closely with school districts to assist with the grant writing process. BOE awarded grants to school districts over four cycles of funding: December 14, 1998; February 23, 1999; March 30, 1999; and April 27 1999.

Table 1: Breakdown of funded programs	
FUNDED PROGRAMS	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
Summer School	202
School Year	108
Combination of school year and summer programs	7
Individual tutoring in reading programs	28
TOTAL PROGRAMS FUNDED BY LINE ITEM	345

Districts were required to submit student assessment data and a program evaluation to DOE at the program's completion. Data requirements established by DOE included: 1) student's current grade level; 2) assessment used to select student; 3) instructional model used; 4) cumulative hours of services student has actually
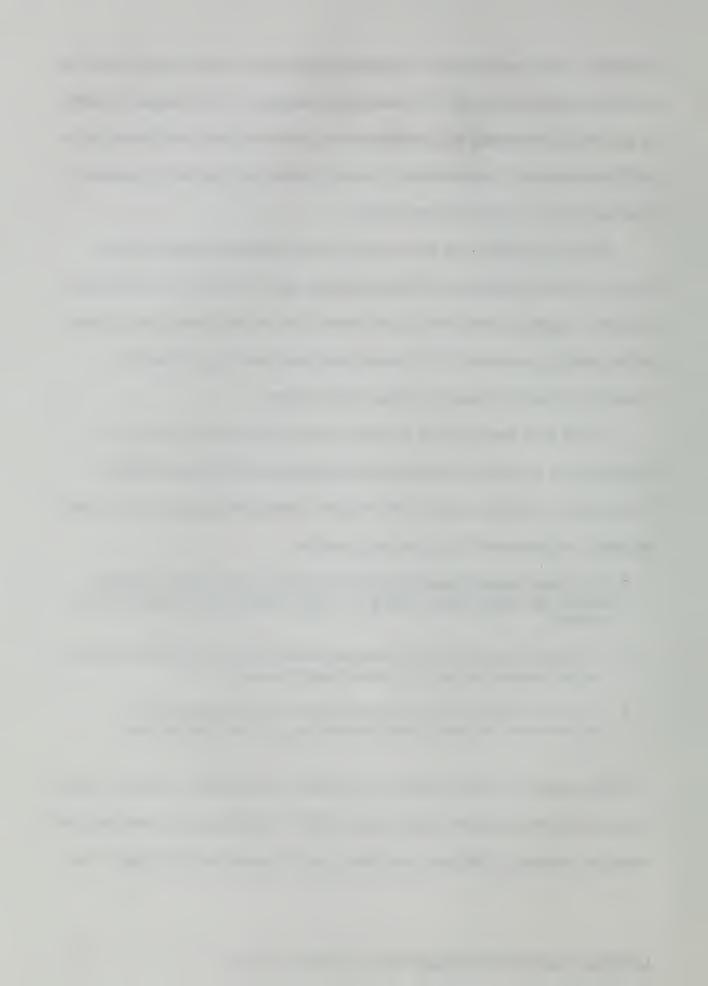
received; 5) tools used to measure individual student's growth (pre- and post-test); 6) individual student results; and 7) documentation available. DOE arranged for data to be submitted electronically and provided school districts with technical assistance to fulfill this requirement. Nevertheless, the data collection and reporting requirement proved problematic to many school districts.

According to DOE, over 90% of state-funded academic support services programs provided instruction in English language arts, more than 75% of programs provided instruction in mathematics, and almost 50% provided instruction in science and technology. In addition, 70% of state-funded academic support services programs provided instruction in multiple content areas.
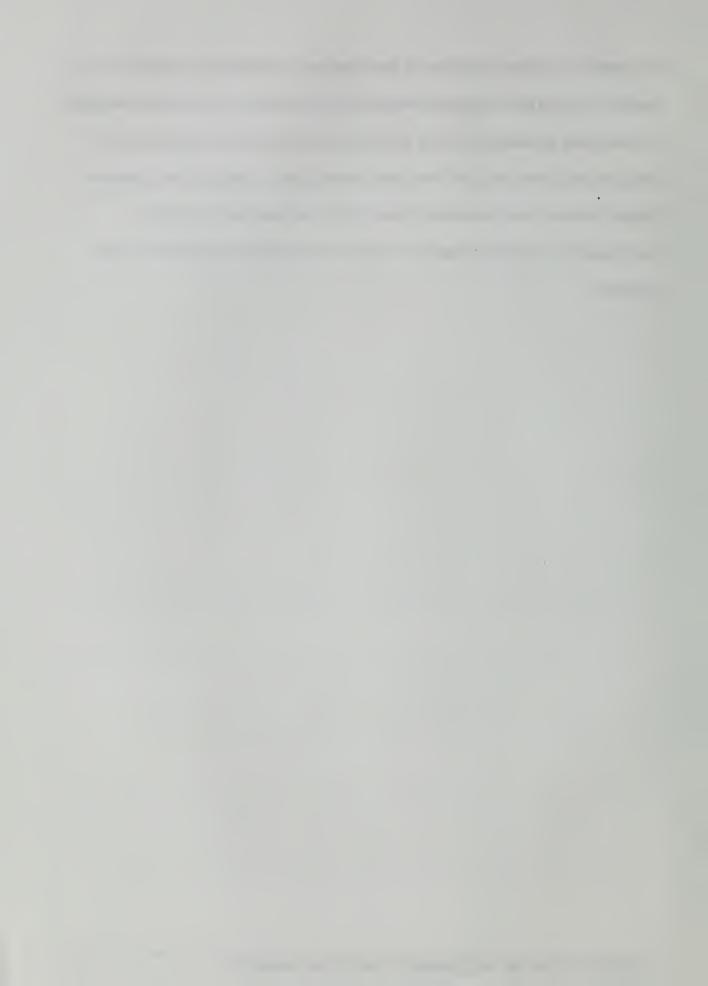
In July 1999, the Center for Education Policy (CEP) at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst contracted with the Massachusetts Education Reform Commission to prepare a report on the implementation of these programs throughout the state. The purpose of this study was threefold:

1. To identify issues affecting the implementation of state-funded academic support services programs during the 1998-1999 academic year, including summer.

2. To identify future policy issues affecting the delivery of state-funded academic support services programs to Massachusetts students.

3. To provide feedback to the Commission on the effectiveness of the implementation of state-funded academic support services programs.

DOE provided CEP with background information and access to academic support services grant proposals that were funded in FY99. In addition, site visits conducted during the summer of 1999 were coordinated and conducted with DOE staff. This

was done to minimize the amount of time program administrators and staff had to spend away from their classroom responsibilities and duties. The survey instrument, the main data gathering vehicle for this study, was developed, distributed, and analyzed exclusively by CEP. We hope that this study is useful to the Education Reform Review Commission and to staff at DOE and local school districts responsible for providing students with state-funded academic support services programs.
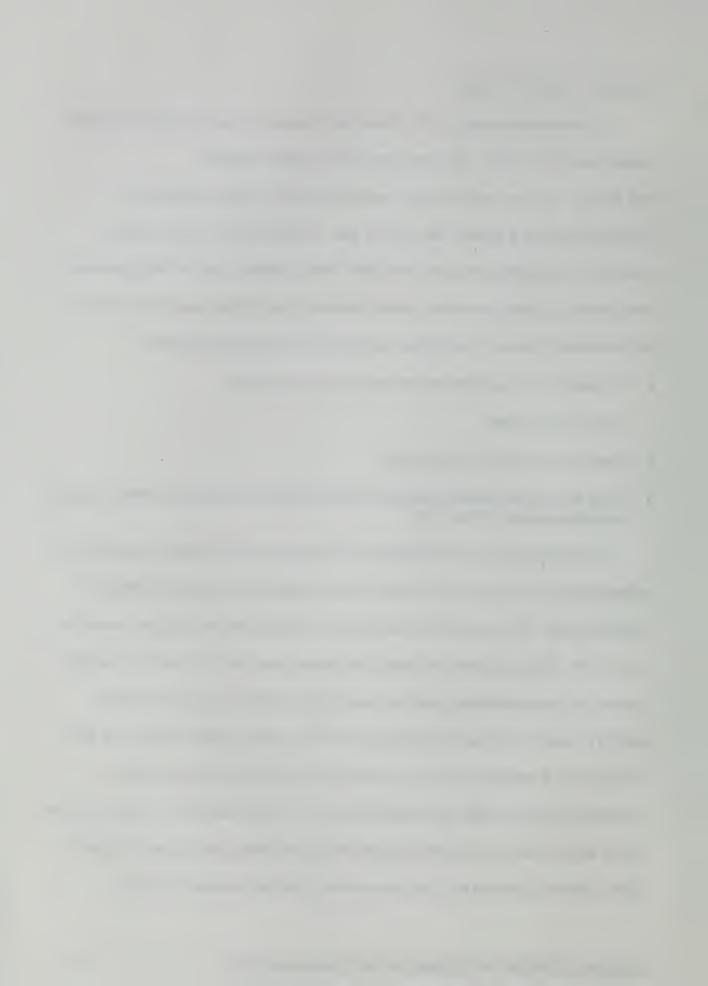
SECTION 2: METHODOLGY

To conduct the study, (CEP) initiated a three-part research project during the summer and fall of 1999. The three parts of the project included:

Mail Survey. A survey was mailed to superintendents in school districts that implemented either a state-funded school year, summer school, and individual reading in tutoring program during the 1998-1999 academic year, including summer. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback from school superintendents on implementation issues. In particular, questions on the survey focused on:

♦ The selection of students and the services they received,

♦ Outreach to parents,

♦ Selection and training of staff, and

♦ Policy and implementation issues that might affect state-funded academic support services programs in the future.

The mail survey was distributed to 200 school superintendents in districts that implemented school year and/or summer school programs during the 1998-1999 academic year. One hundred and twenty-one surveys were returned for a response rate of 61%. The population included all school districts that received state funding to offer their students school year, summer school programs, and/or individual tutoring in reading programs (202 districts received grants to offer school year and summer school programs, two school districts decided not to implement their programs during the 1998-1999 academic year.) Surveys were not mailed to the two school districts that implemented only the individual tutoring and reading programs. School districts surveyed included urban school districts, regional technical
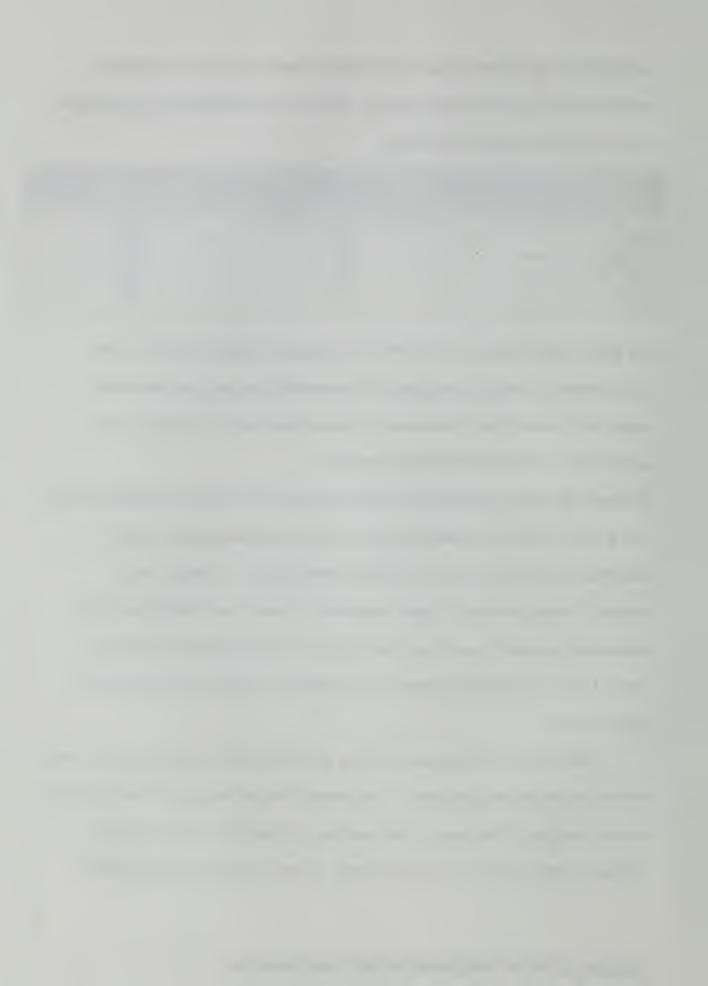
vocational and agricultural school districts (Vocational), suburban school districts, rural school districts, and charter schools. Table 2 below breaks down the responses to the mail survey by school district type.

Table 2: Mail survey responses by school district type.		
SCHOOL DISTRICT TYPE	NUMBER VALID RESPONSES	PERCENT
Urban	19	16%
Vocational	19	16%
Suburban	41	34%
Rural	31	26%
Charter	5	5%
Other	6	5%

Site Visits. During the summer of 1999, site visits were made to selected urban school districts to meet with program staff implementing state-funded academic support services summer schools and to observe classrooms. Site visits were coordinated and conducted with staff from DOE.

Document Analysis. In addition to the mail survey and site visits, data were collected from a review of the 317 academic support services program grant proposals submitted by local school districts and approved by DOE. In addition, when available, required evaluation reports submitted by local school districts about their state-funded academic support services programs were reviewed and analyzed. Finally, DOE documents about state-funded academic support services programs were reviewed.

The site visits and document analysis provided useful background data to help develop the mail survey instrument. The results of the mail survey provide the bulk of the data analyzed in this report. Data from site visits and document analysis is provided to add context to survey responses. A copy of the survey is provided in

Appendix B and a list of site visits conducted during the summer is included in Appendix C. Appendix D provides the interview protocol used during site visit interviews.
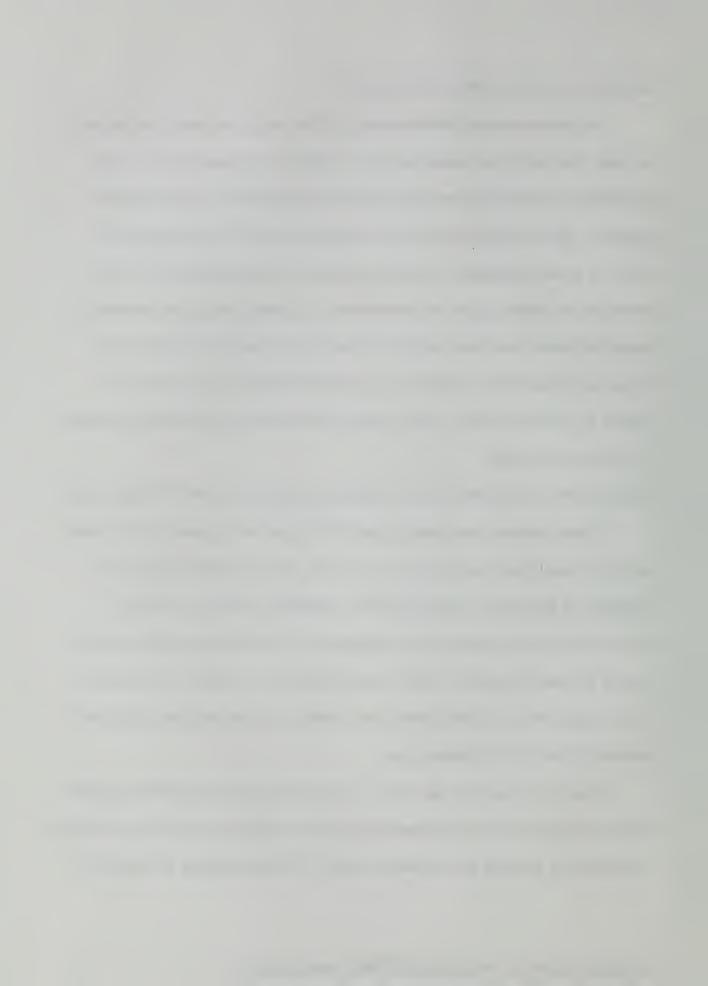
SECTION 3: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents both the findings of the mail survey and a discussion of the data. The findings are presented first by looking at responses to mail survey questions by all school districts offering state-funded academic support services programs. Data from site visits and document analysis is also provided to add context to survey responses. For some questions, analysis of data identified key differences for different types of school districts and these findings are presented for school districts by type (urban school districts, regional technical vocational and agricultural school districts (Vocational), suburban school districts, rural school districts, and charter schools. Those findings follow the presentation and discussion of overall survey results.

REASONS FOR OFFERING STATE-FUNDED ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Superintendents were asked to identify the reasons for offering state-funded academic support services programs to students. Improving MCAS scores, the availability of state funds, and having staff committed to providing services to students were major reasons survey respondents provided state-funded academic support services to students. Table 3 below presents a summary of reasons why survey respondents provided state-funded academic support services programs to students in the 1998-1999 school year.
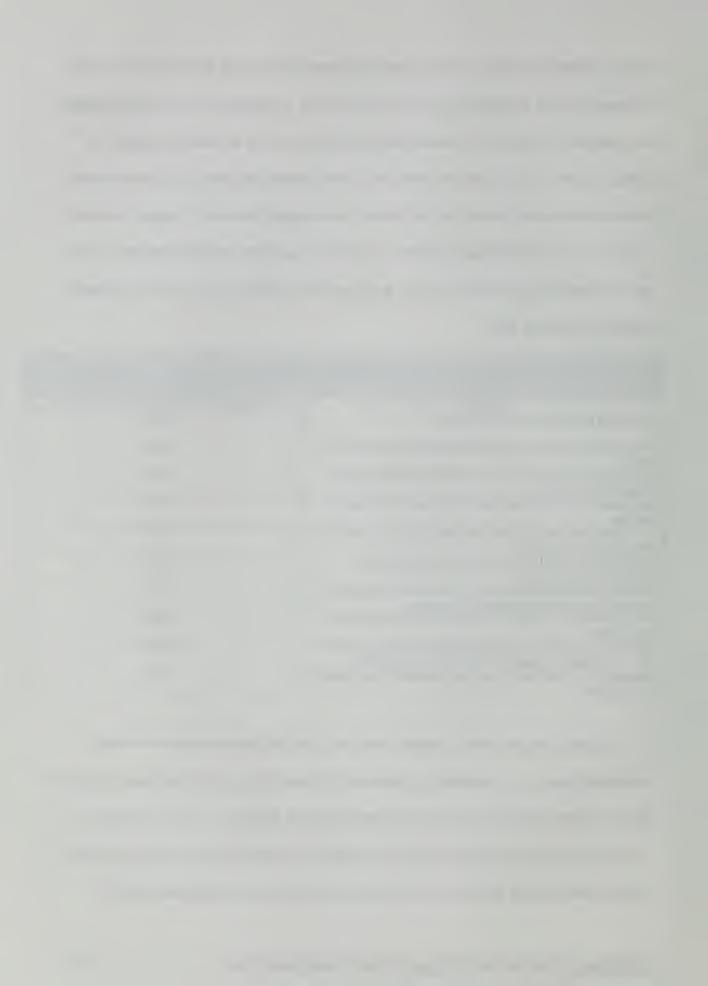
Data from the survey, site visits, and document analysis indicate that school officials throughout the Commonwealth say that they are very committed to providing low performing students with academic support services programs, as long as the

state provides the funds. Improving MCAS scores and having school staff that was motivated to offer academic support services were, according to survey respondents, two important reasons for implementing academic support services programs. In addition, over 70% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statements that their school district offered state-funded academic support services programs to 1) add instructional time; 2) academic support services programs were part of a district's improvement plan; and 3) school officials wanted to help students develop test taking skills.

Table 3: Reasons for offering state-funded academic support programs.	
REASON	PERCENT AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE
We wanted to improve our MCAS scores	96.6%
The funds for academic support programs were provided by the state.	95.8%
Principals and teachers wanted to provide academic support programs to students.	93.3%
We wanted to add additional instructional time to the school day/year.	82.1%
We included academic support programs as part of our school district improvement plan.	78.4%
We wanted to provide our students with an opportunity to develop test-taking skills.	78.4%
We were concerned that if we do not improve MCAS scores the state will rate our schools as performing poorly.	67%
Parents asked that academic support programs be provided to their children.	53.1%
State-funded academic support programs provide our teachers with an important professional development opportunity.	52.5%
We wanted to provide our teachers with additional employment opportunities.	10.1%

Survey respondents indicated that raising MCAS scores was an extremely important reason for implementing state-funded academic support services programs (96.6% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement.) This rating may indicate the pressure school officials are feeling to raise MCAS scores and improve student performance on the eve of the new state school accountability system.
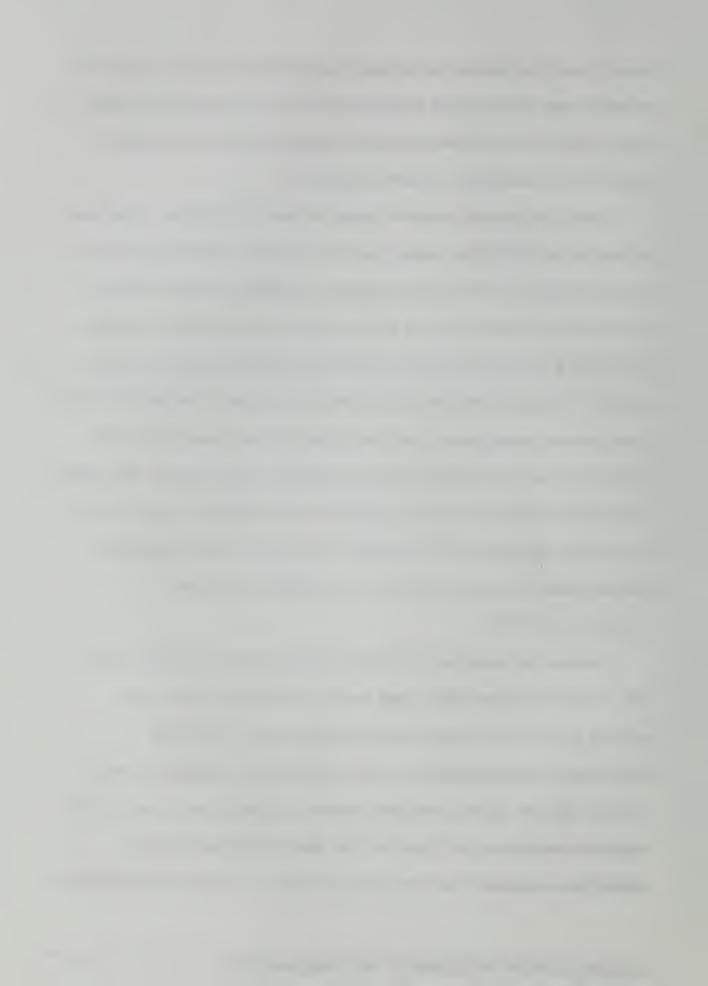
However, as will be discussed further below, survey respondents seem somewhat ambivalent when asked if raising MCAS scores should be the sole focus of state-funded academic support services programs, suggesting that test scores alone should not be the sole judge of student performance.

Clearly, the new state academic support services grant program, which was continued in the FY2000 state budget, served as an incentive for school districts to implement academic support services programs. A significant number, 95.8%, of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that state funds played a role in their decision to offer students academic support services programs. It is unclear how many school districts would have implemented academic support services school year and summer programs for their students during the 1998-1999 school year, without state funds targeted for such programs. When asked if their districts would offer academic support services programs to students, almost half of survey respondents, 46.2%, indicated that their school district would not implement academic support services programs without state funds.

STUDENT SELECTION

The line item authorizing $20 million in funding (Chapter 194 of the Acts of 1998, the state fiscal year 1999 budget, line item 7061-9404) required grant recipients to provide "services for students scoring in level 1 or 2 on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam, so-called, or, only in fiscal year 1999, for students have been identified as needing improvement in their academic knowledge and skill based on other state or locally administered standardized assessment measures at any grade level." In addition to MCAS scores,

school districts used a variety of standardized tests to recommend students for services. Grant proposals submitted to DOE indicated that low performance on district standardized tests was an important instrument used to identify students needing state-funded academic support services programs. Standardized tests used by school districts to identify students eligible for state-funded academic support services programs included:

- Brigance Inventory of Basic Skills

- California Achievement Test

- Gates MacGinite

- IOWA test of Basic Skills

- ITBS

- Metropolitan Achievement Test

- Silveroli Reading Inventory

- Stanford Achievement Test (Stanford 9)

- Terra Nova

- Wide-Range Achievement Test

- Woodcock Johnson

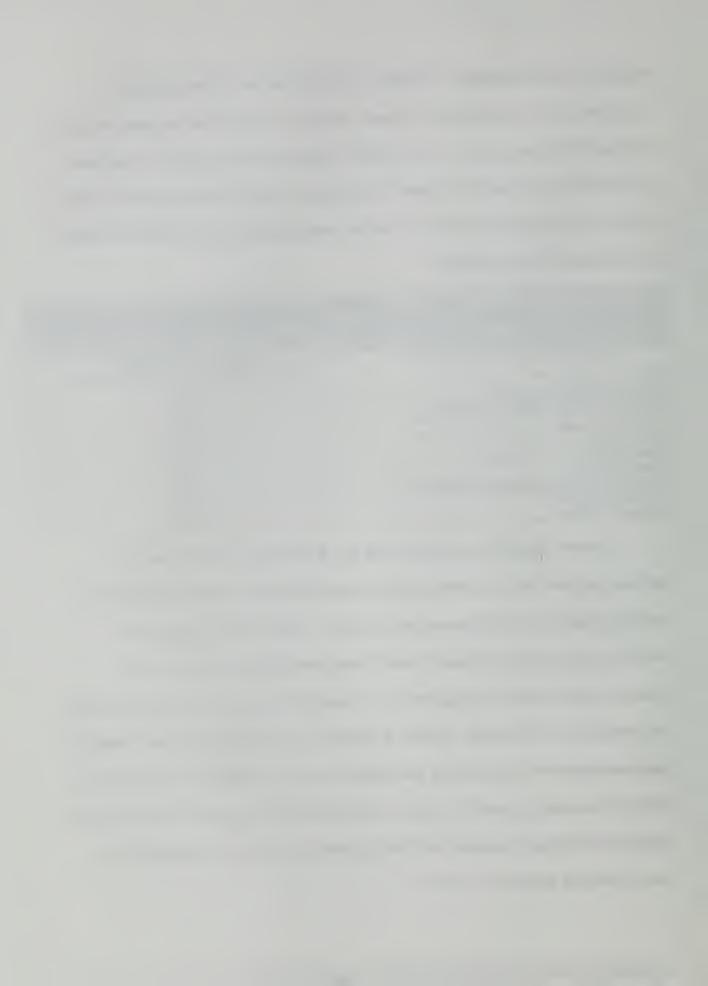School districts used both MCAS results and results from local standardized tests to select students to participate in state-funded academic support services programs. Ninety-three percent (93.3%) of survey respondents reported that MCAS tests were somewhat important to very important in the selection of students and 88.8% of respondents rated standardized test scores were either somewhat important to very

important in student selection. Therefore, standardized test scores played a significant role in the selection of students, as was required by the language included with the FY99 appropriation. Table 4 below identifies various selection criteria used by school districts to identify students to participate in state-funded academic support services programs and the percent of survey respondents responding that the criteria was somewhat to very important.

Table 4: Percent of survey respondents indicating selection criteria for selecting students was somewhat/very important	
CRITERIA FOR SELECTING STUDENTS	PERCENT RESPONDING SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT/VERY IMPORTANT
MCAS test scores	93.3%
Recommendations from teachers	90.8%
Student's standardized test scores, non-MCAS	88.8%
Request by a parent	82.9%
Course grades	81.9%
Recommendations from principals	78.8%
Failed course(s)	77.8%
Recommendations from guidance counselors	73.4%
Poor test-taking skills	67.2%
Request by a student	63.9%

A parent request to enroll their child in a state-funded academic support services program was also seen by survey respondents as an important reason for selecting students to participate in their program. School districts want to be responsive to parents and clearly viewed the implementation of state-funded academic support services programs as one way that the school could serve children and families more effectively. Unclear is whether or not students who were selected because of a parent request were also eligible for services based on other selection criteria. Encouraging parental support and participation is important, but the focus of state-funded academic support services programs must first be on students who need additional academic support.
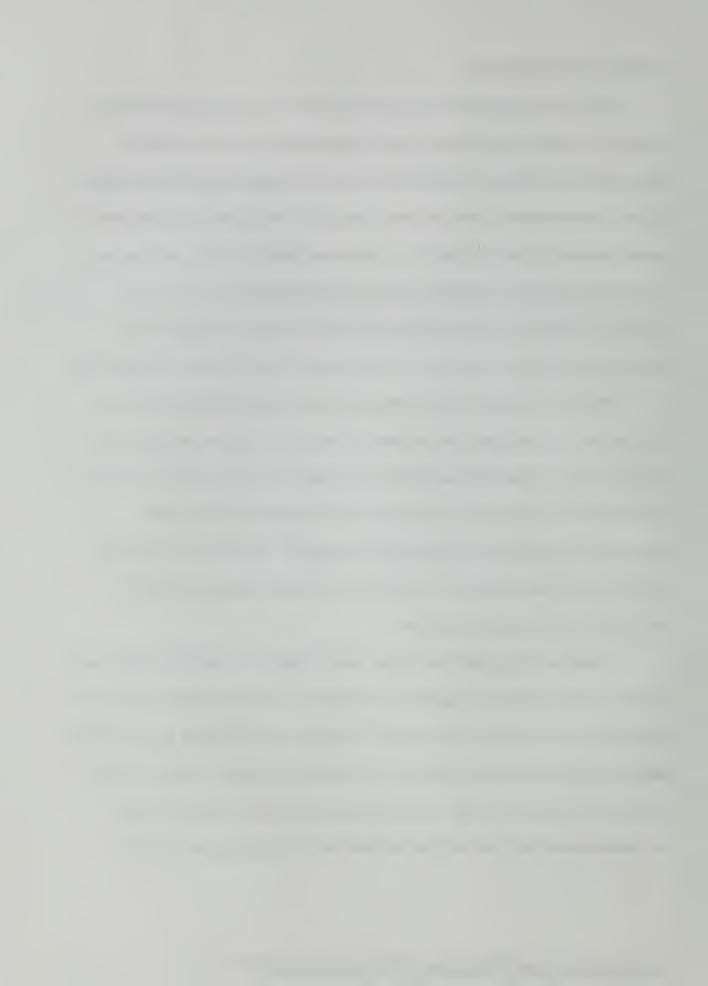
School districts seemed to have little trouble with identifying students who qualified or needed state-funded academic support services. A more difficult implementation challenge all school districts faced was devising effective strategies to recruit and motivate students to attend programs. The mail survey asked school superintendents to identify which, if any, incentives were effective in recruiting and motivating students to participate in state-funded academic support services programs. Survey respondents were asked to rate a specific incentive as very ineffective, somewhat ineffective, somewhat effective, very effective, or inapplicable.

When controlling for the percentage of survey respondents that answered inapplicable to a particular incentive listed on the survey, it is clear that providing students with individual attention either through tutoring and/or smaller class sizes and implementing more active learning environments were rated by survey respondents as highly effective recruitment strategies. Table 5 below identifies incentives rated as somewhat or very effective by survey respondents while controlling for inapplicable responses.

These results suggest that program administrators are designing state-funded academic support services programs to facilitate more interaction between student and teacher and that this strategy is seen by program administrators as an effective way to motivate students to participate in state-funded academic support services programs. In addition, the two most applicable incentives identified by survey respondents were small student/teacher ratio and providing students with an

opportunity to improve MCAS scores, incentives that are reflective of the goal of state-funded academic support services programs.

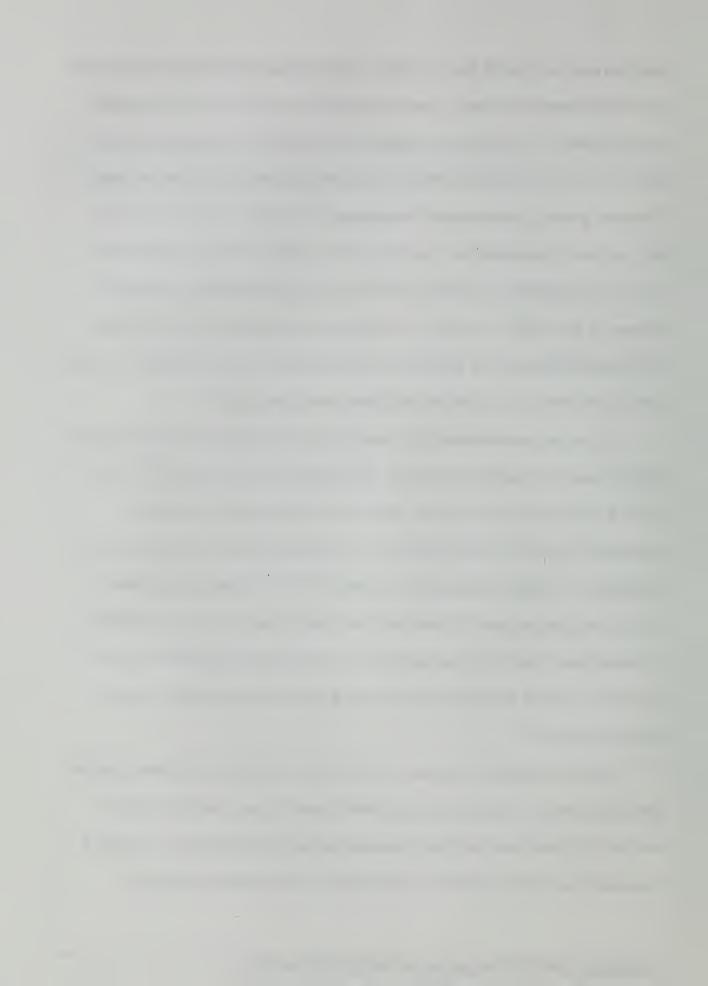| Table 5: Percent of survey respondents indicating incentive somewhat/very effective when controlling for inapplicable		
INCENTIVE	PERCENT INDICATING SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE/VERY EFFECTIVE	PERCENT INDICATING INAPPLICABLE
Individual tutoring	100%	39.3%
Project-based learning opportunities	98.8%	31.4%
Small student/teacher ratio	97.4%	0.8%
Free transportation	97.3%	36.4%
Opportunity to improve MCAS scores	94.7%	2.6%
Use of computers	92.0%	36.4%
Promotion to next grade	86.8%	67.8%
Opportunity to transition to a new school	86.0%	56.9%
Recreational opportunities	84.3%	56.4%
Field trips	80.8%	55.9%
Free breakfast or lunch	78.1%	72.9%
Peer tutoring	77.5%	66.1%
Course credit	74.4%	66.9%
Students paid to attend program	71.4%	88.0%
Gifts from area merchants	50.0%	88.0%

Grant proposals reviewed for this study consistently proposed small student/teacher ratios in school year and summer school state-funded academic support services programs. Classes observed during the summer consisted of low student/teacher ratios. The largest class observed had 15 students to 1 teacher and the smallest had a student/teacher ratio of 2:1. One program administrator commented that students liked the smaller classes because they felt they were getting more attention. As one program administrator commented, "Kids [in summer program] feel like they have something worthy to say and to offer." One program administrator stated in the program evaluation that, "Small teacher-pupil ratios gave our students new opportunities for direct responses in practice opportunities."

Teachers also liked having fewer students in their classes so that they could provide individual attention to students. One program administrator said that her teachers described teaching in school year programs as the "best teaching experience they ever had." This comment was echoed by another program administrator who said, "Teachers are really positive about the experience; smaller groups, casual dress, really enjoying the experience." Students seem to like the individual attention they received and teachers were able to provide more individual attention to students because of the smaller class sizes. In addition to hiring teachers to provide direct instructional services, some school districts reduced class sizes even further by using funds to hire peer tutors to provide additional instructional support.

Survey respondents also highly rated the opportunity for students to improve MCAS scores as an effective incentive. This rating seems surprisingly high. For example, one program administrator commented during a site visit that skill development was not in itself enough of an incentive to motivate students to attend the program. It would be interesting to survey students in state-funded academic support services programs to determine if they feel the same way. Now that BOE has established a performance requirement for high school graduation, are low performing students more motivated to enroll in state-funded academic support services programs?

Survey respondents stressed the importance of project-based learning as an effective incentive. Instructional approaches in state-funded academic support services programs were designed to be more active and participatory. The use of computers was another incentive rated effective by more than half of survey
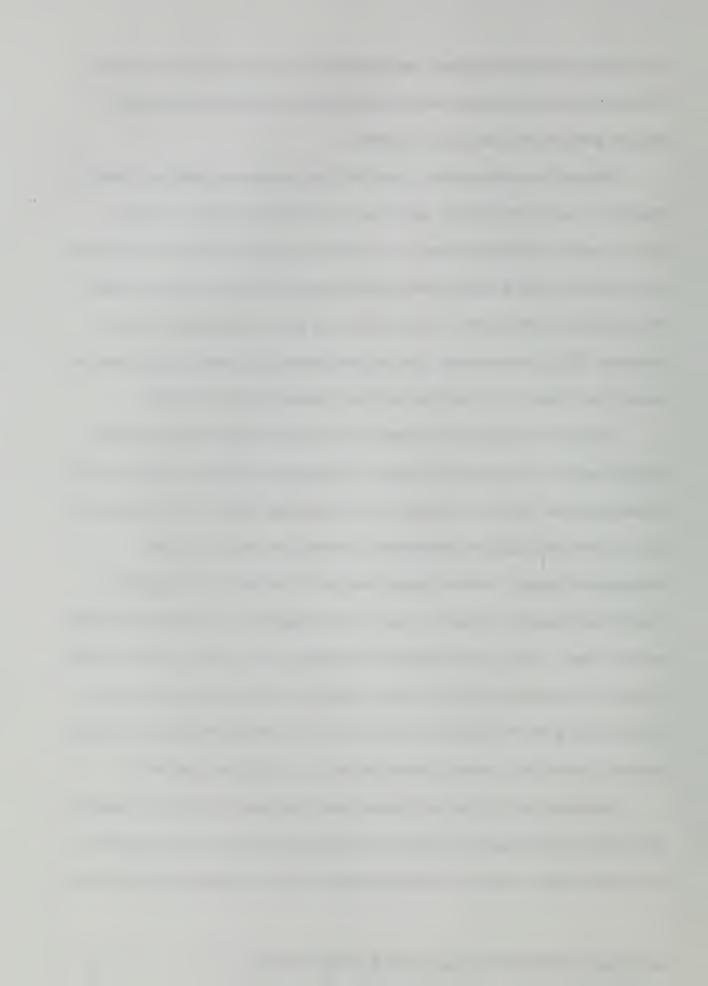
respondents. Although computers can be helpful and can supplement classroom instruction, the effectiveness of educational software in helping low performing students gain ground is still an open question.

Although free transportation to and from the program was rated as an effective incentive by survey respondents, some saw it as a barrier to program success. Asking parents to transport students to and from the program allowed administrators and teachers in several state-funded academic support services programs to have more interaction with parents. Transportation was also expensive and, in some instances, difficult to coordinate. One program administrator said that transportation was a huge problem but a real incentive to encourage student participation.

Program administrators also tried to "wrap around" state-funded academic programs with local recreational programs. For example, one urban district wrote in its grant proposal "we will be working with local agencies (YMCA, YWCA, extended day programs) and supplying families with extended day alternatives and transportation options." Another district arranged for students participating in its state-funded academic support services summer program to swim at the local YMCA twice per week. Another urban school district stated in their grant proposal that "[B]y combining the academics with the afternoon activities of their [student's] choice as well as building into the program two field trips, we feel that there will be incentives to not only to attend the summer academy but also to put forth their best effort."

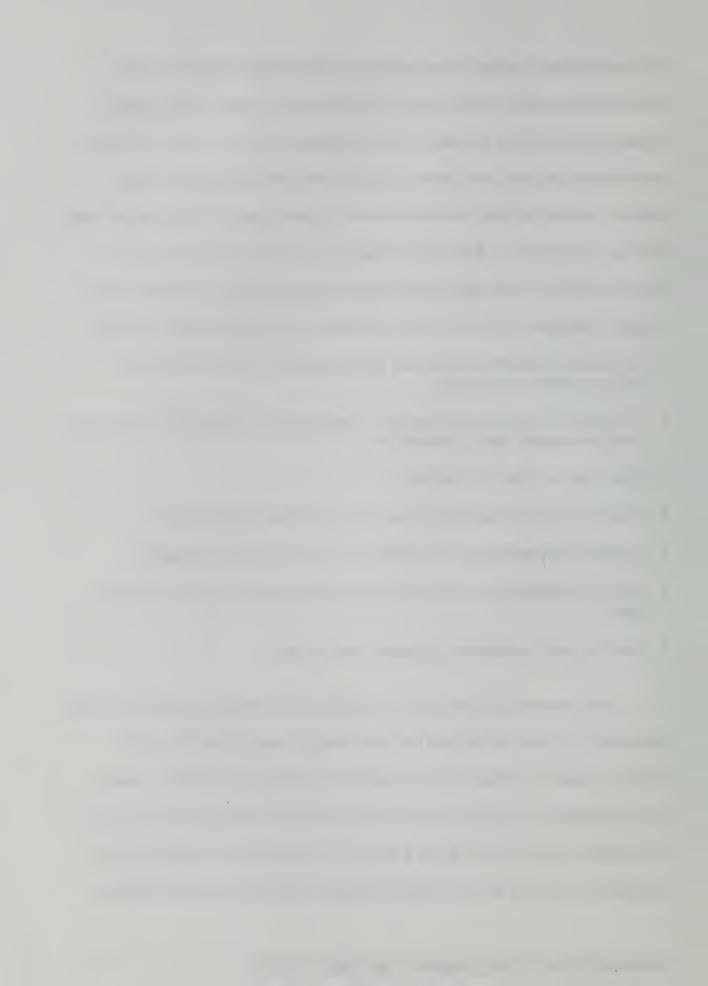Several school districts used various fiscal incentives to encourage students to attend state-funded academic support services programs and to boost attendance. Although not highly rated as an effective incentive, some interesting comments about

this incentive were reported on the mail survey. One vocational school district provided students with a "$100 stipend to purchase tools, books or educational software if they had 80% attendance for the summer program." Another vocational school district awarded "two freshmen shop uniform shirts and a pair of safety glasses; ownership of these items is required of all ninth graders during the first week of school in September." Two rural districts reported that they asked parents or students to pay a fee that was returned to them upon successful completion of the program. Examples of other incentives reported by survey respondents included:

♦ For every 10 sessions attended with effort extended, a score of 100% was factored in their regular grade.

♦ Funding from Title 1 allowed academic support services program to be enhanced through breakfast, lunch, field trips, etc.

♦ Free T-shirt with name of program.

♦ Programs offered at student's home school by familiar teaching staff.

♦ Teachers selected to teach in the program have outstanding reputations.

♦ Applied learning through building projects and integrating math, very effective model.

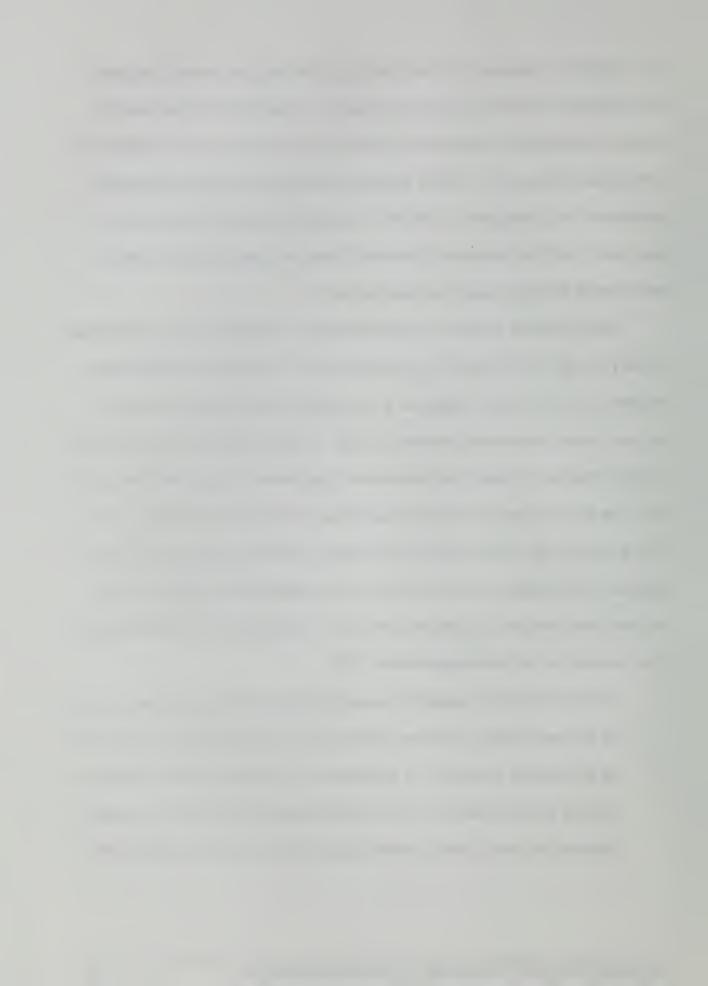♦ Teachers being supportive of students very important.

One consistent comment made by program administrators during the site visits conducted in July and August was that even though it was not hard to identify students, it was very difficult to recruit students to participate in academic support services programs. Recruiting students posed particular challenges to programs serving high school students, grade 9 and up. For example, one vocational district proposed to conduct a survey through the student council to determine incentives

that "might turn students on." State-funded academic support services programs competed with many other programs for students, especially during the summer months. One program administrator commented that "it was tough to compete with non-academic programs." Another program administrator said that until students understand the consequences of MCAS, "academically oriented programs are a tough sell." Another commented that older children were less willing to come to state-funded academic support services programs.

School districts consistently overestimated the number of students who would actually sign-up and participate in school year and/or summer school state-funded academic support services programs. For example, one suburban school district wrote in its evaluation report submitted to DOE, "Towards the end of the school year program attendance became an issue as spring sports and outdoor activities begin" and "The summer program was under-subscribed. Parents were unable to commit for the entire program due to prior commitments." Another suburban school district reported, "Unfortunately, since the advent of nice weather, the appeal of an after school-tutoring program has begun to diminish." According to one evaluation report from an urban school district submitted to DOE:
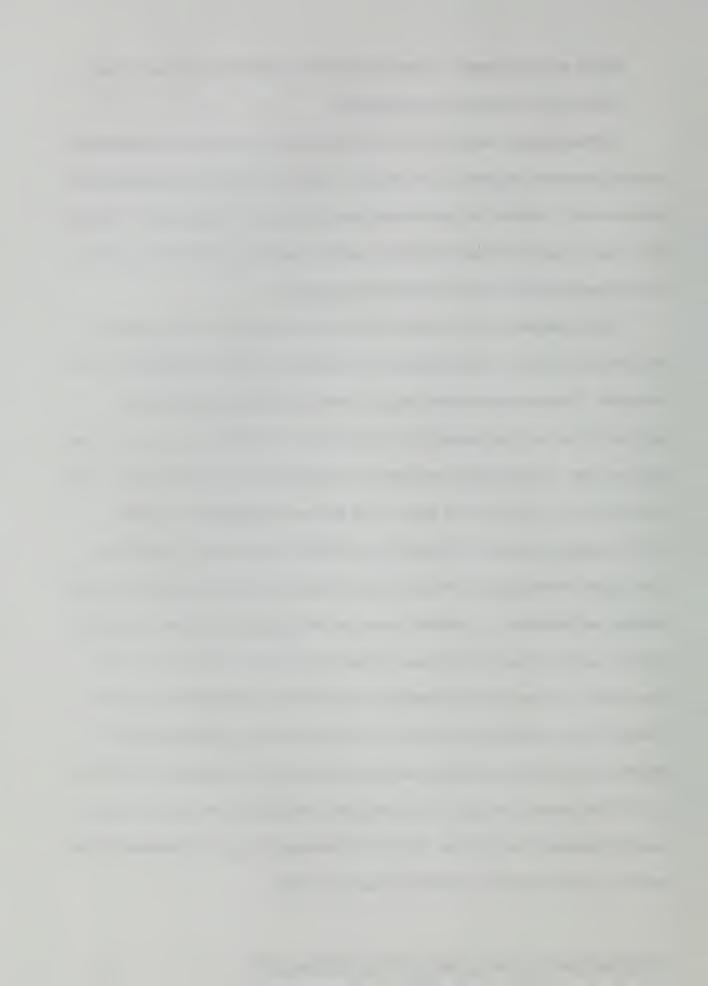
The staff felt that the students entering the 8th grade this school year were by far the best students and those entering the 10th grade this school year were by far the worst students. The staff believed the reason for this was that the younger students were more motivated to learn and were more enthusiastic whereas the older students seemed to believe that they were entitled to the

MCAS review program and also that the MCAS test does not count for them so they did not take the review seriously.

Another program administrator wrote in the district's evaluation, "It was easier to recruit elementary students to the program. Middle and high school students were more reluctant." Another program administrator stated in an evaluation that, "Parents should pay a small fee toward the tutoring costs. Attendance can be an issue if the tutoring sessions are not taken seriously by the parents."

School districts receiving state-funded academic support services programs also scheduled programs, especially summer programs, to better coincide with family schedules. State-funded academic support services summer programs visited generally conducted their programs from 8:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. or noon, four or five days per week. Most programs ran from four to five weeks. Programs began during the last week of June or the first week of July and were completed by August to provide students, and staff, with some time off before school began in September. One program administrator interviewed stated that the "four day week helps get staff, teachers, and students." One district visited ran its state-funded academic support services summer program in two-week blocks and allowed students to sign-up for either block. Classes were held Monday through Friday in this particular program. However, fewer students signed up for the second two-week block of programs. Another program visited during the summer offered students classes from 4:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. Monday through Friday in addition to offering two three week morning sessions Monday through Friday. The district scheduled a week off between the two sessions to give students and staff a mid-summer break.
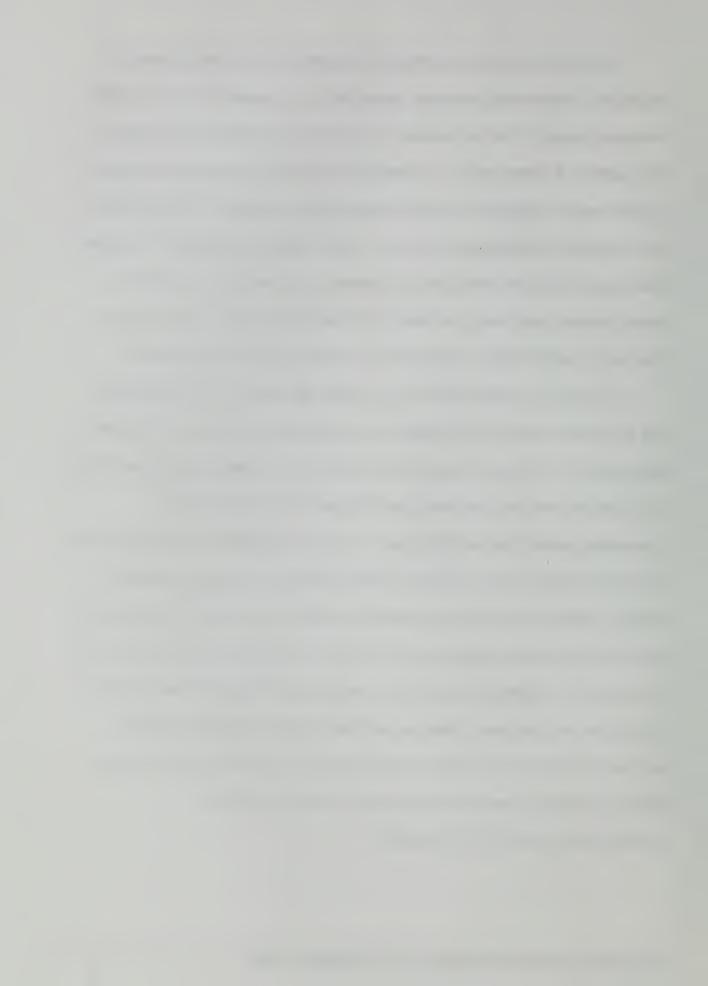
Finding the right mix of incentives to encourage and motivate students to participate in state-funded academic support services programs is one of the more challenging aspect of this new program to program administrators. Encouraging older students, 9th grade and up, to attend state-funded academic support services programs seems to be particularly problematic to school officials, in the absence of local mandatory attendance requirements. State-funded academic support services school year and summer programs are competing with many other programs for student attention, particularly recreational and social programs. As one program administrator stated bluntly, "academically oriented programs are a tough sell."

It should be expected that since the 1998-1999 academic year was the first year that school districts offered state-funded academic support services programs, determining when academic support services should be scheduled is as challenging to program administrators as developing effective instructional programs. Coordinating state-funded academic support services programs with other academic and non-academic programs offered by school districts or the community might reduce competition for students. Developing so-called "wrap around" services with other community-based agencies might better serve students and their families and might provide an additional incentive for students to attend state-funded academic support services programs. However, such recreational incentives should not diminish the main purpose of state-funded academic support services programs which is to provide remedial services to low performing students.
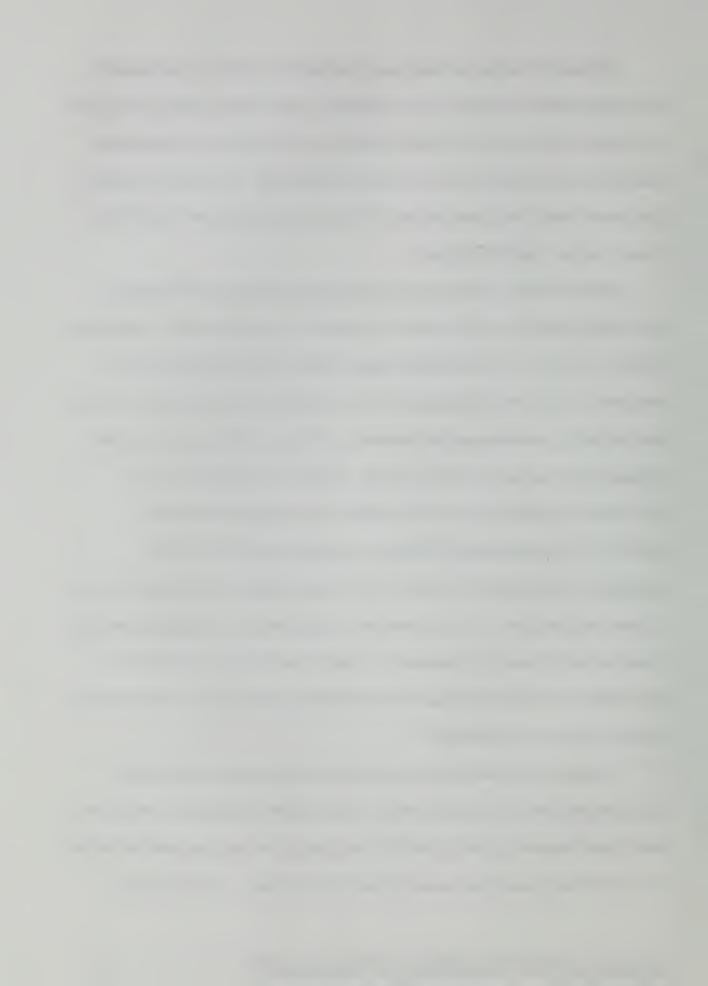
MANDATING STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Incentives alone may not be enough motivation for students to participate in state-funded academic support services programs. One important policy issue under consideration by local school officials is whether or not attendance in state-funded academic support services programs should be mandated. Thus, in the near future, more school districts might require low performing students to attend state-funded academic support services program.

Fewer than ten percent of survey respondents indicated that attendance in state-funded academic support services programs was mandatory for low performing students. Of the 90.1% of survey respondents reporting that attendance was not mandatory, a significant percentage of survey respondents indicated that their district was considering mandating student attendance in state-funded academic support services school year and summer programs. Seventy-one percent of survey respondents indicated that their school district was considering mandating attendance in summer programs and sixty-two percent (62.3%) of survey respondents reported that their school district was considering mandating attendance in school year programs. This indicates very strong interest in mandating attendance in summer school programs, especially in urban school districts where 85.7% of respondents in urban districts reported that mandating attendance in summer school programs was under consideration.

Several program administrators commented during the site visits about mandated attendance in summer schools. One program administrator said that her district was considering piloting mandatory summer school next year and that people in her district were looking at summer school more seriously. Another program
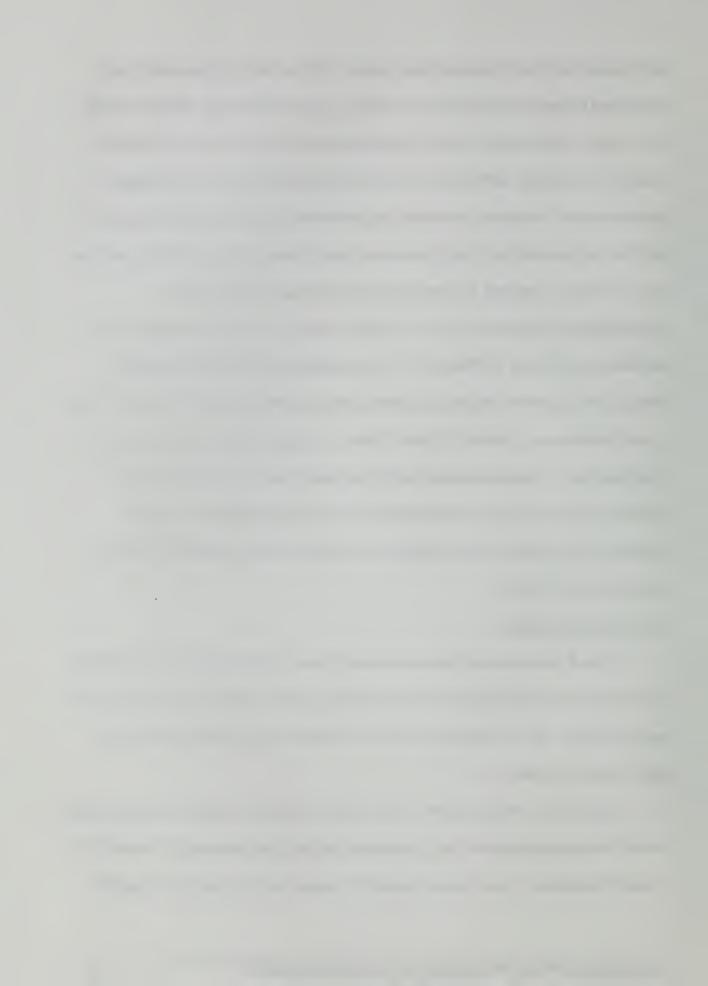
administrator said that mandatory attendance in the summer program was being considered because of competition with other programs offered to students during the summer. Another program administrator said that her district needed "some muscle" to encourage participation and "some consequences for not completing academic work." However, one district superintendent stated strongly during a site visit that his district did not need mandatory state-funded academic support services summer schools. Instead, summer school would be part of the district's comprehensive improvement plan and that he wanted "to get more evidence that summer school makes a difference." Another program administrator said that, although she wanted to see more students going to summer school, she did not want to see it labeled as a "dummy" school. Finally, a program administrator said that a mandatory state-funded academic support services program would have been a different program. The small student/teacher ratio and the attention students received in the summer school program made "students excited about academics" and motivated to attend.

Key District Differences

Table 6 below shows the percentage of survey respondents by school district type indicating that attendance in state-funded academic support services programs was mandated. For this question, results for different types of districts showed a great deal of variability.

Given recent MCAS results in urban school districts, it should not be surprising that school superintendents from urban school districts are interested in mandating student attendance in state-funded academic support services summer programs.
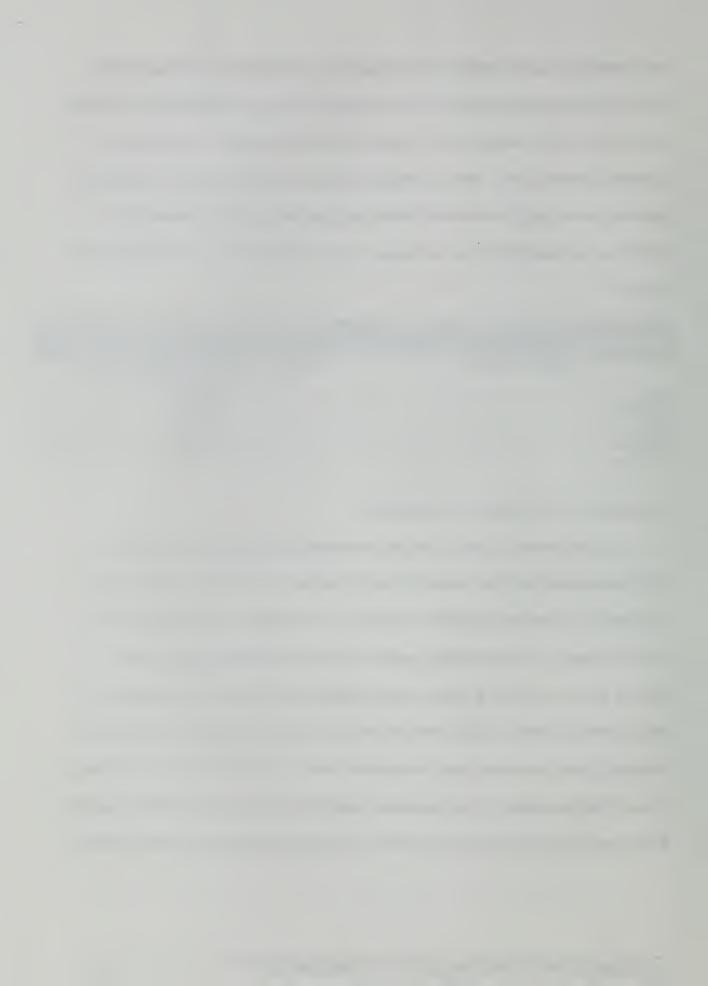
The challenge of getting low performing students to attend state-funded academic support services programs was summed-up rather nicely by a program administrator who said her district needed some "muscle" and "consequences" for students to complete academic work. School districts might need to develop a "carrot and stick" approach, encouraging students to attend programs through an effective mix of incentives, but establishing real consequences for students who do not complete the program.

Table 6: Percent of school districts by type indicating that attendance was mandatory	
SCHOOL DISTRICT	PERCENT INDICATING ATTENDANCE WAS MANDATORY
Urban	26.3%
Vocational	10.5%
Rural	9.7%
Suburban	4.9%
Charter	0.0%

FOLLOW-UP SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

A slight majority, 53.4%, of survey respondents indicated that their school district established a formal process to provide follow-up information about student performance to teachers, guidance counselors, and parents. This is disappointing given the need to provide ongoing support services to low performing students. Without a formal process to communicate student gains during their participation in state-funded academic support services program, school staff might not be aware of a student's progress and/or new instructional needs. In addition, the lack of follow-up makes integrating state-funded academic support services programs with the regular school year much more difficult to achieve. The goal should be to provide students

with a continuum of coordinated academic support to more effectively help students achieve student performance goals.
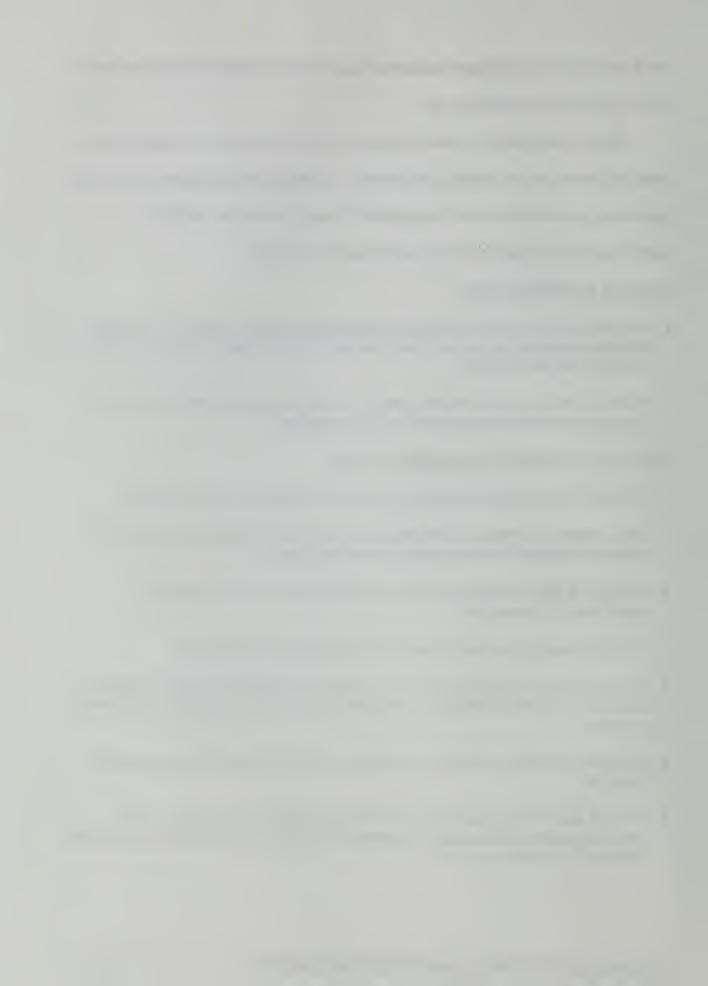
Survey respondents reported a variety of ways that they implemented formal follow-up procedures on student performance. Three general categories of follow-up procedures were identified from an analysis of survey responses: portfolios, staff/parent communication, and use of computer technology.

Examples of portfolios include:

♦ Portfolios from summer academy passed on to next year's teachers. Reports included standards worked on, data, program of study materials used, students' strengths and weaknesses.

♦ Portfolios with pre- and post-test, samples of student work (portfolios) were sent to each student's teacher for the 99-2000 school year.

Examples of staff/parent communication include:

♦ Progress report to parents and a copy placed in student's cumulative folder.

♦ Title 1 teachers tested all students tutored and gave results (pre- and post-tests scores) to principal, teachers, and guidance counselors.

♦ Students at the middle school met with staff to continue the connections established in the summer.

♦ A faculty meeting was held to explain the program and the results.

♦ Follow-up info. on student performance became available to teachers, guidance counselor and parents through summaries written by the teachers who taught the program.

♦ Program coordinator provided an overview of the program and met with each principal.

♦ A report card was created and sent home at the end of our program. This provided parents with a report on student performance. This report card was also placed in the student's record.

Examples of computer technology include:

♦ Principals/teachers were able to access the progress reports on-line.

♦ Success Maker Software used by project coordinator who printed and compiled data; made it available for teachers, parents, and other school officials.

♦ Student Smart Website for parents to access the data on their child at any time. All students [will be] tracked for four years. This material part of usual information now.
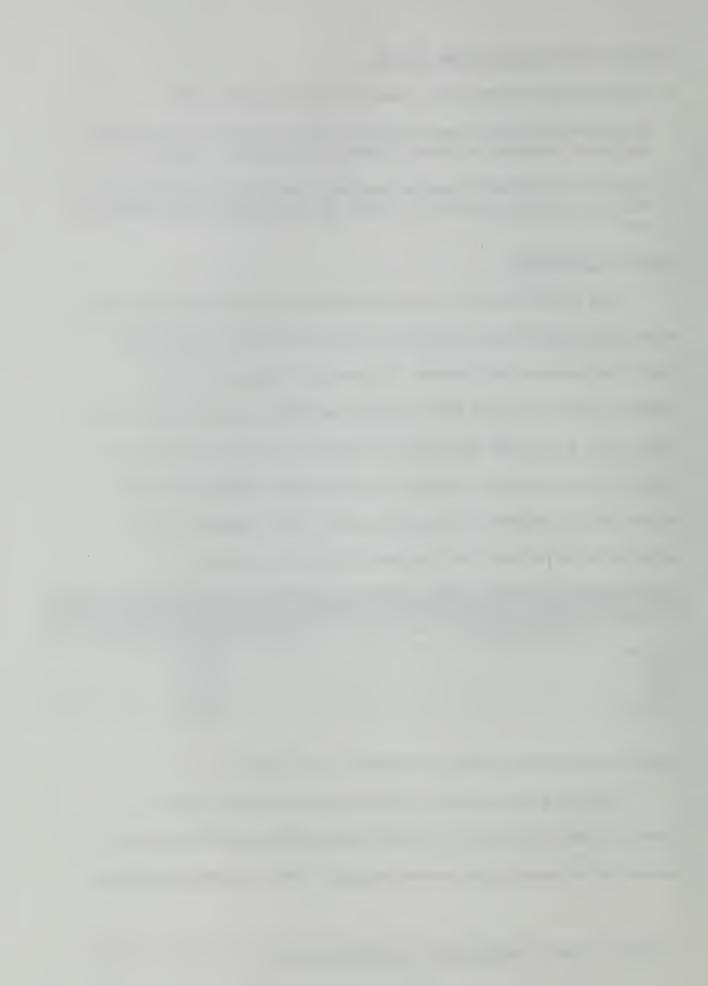
Key District Differences

Table 7 below breaks down responses by district type to the question asking survey respondents if follow-up services for students in state-funded academic support services were being planned. Suburban districts were more likely to establish a follow-up process, 61%, and vocational districts were least likely, 38.9%. These results suggest that school districts in general need more comprehensive planning to provide follow-up services to students so that state-funded academic support services programs do not become another "add on" program and that vocational school districts in particular need better follow-up planning.

Table 7: Percentage of school districts by type providing follow-up on student performance	
SCHOOL DISTRICT	PERCENT PROVIDING FOLLOW-UP
Suburban	61%
Rural	55.2%
Urban	52.9%
Charter	40%
Vocational	38.9%

PARENTAL OUTREACH AND INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES

Encouraging more parental involvement in their child's education is a challenge faced by all educators, not just program administrators and teachers in state-funded academic support services programs. Often, low performing students
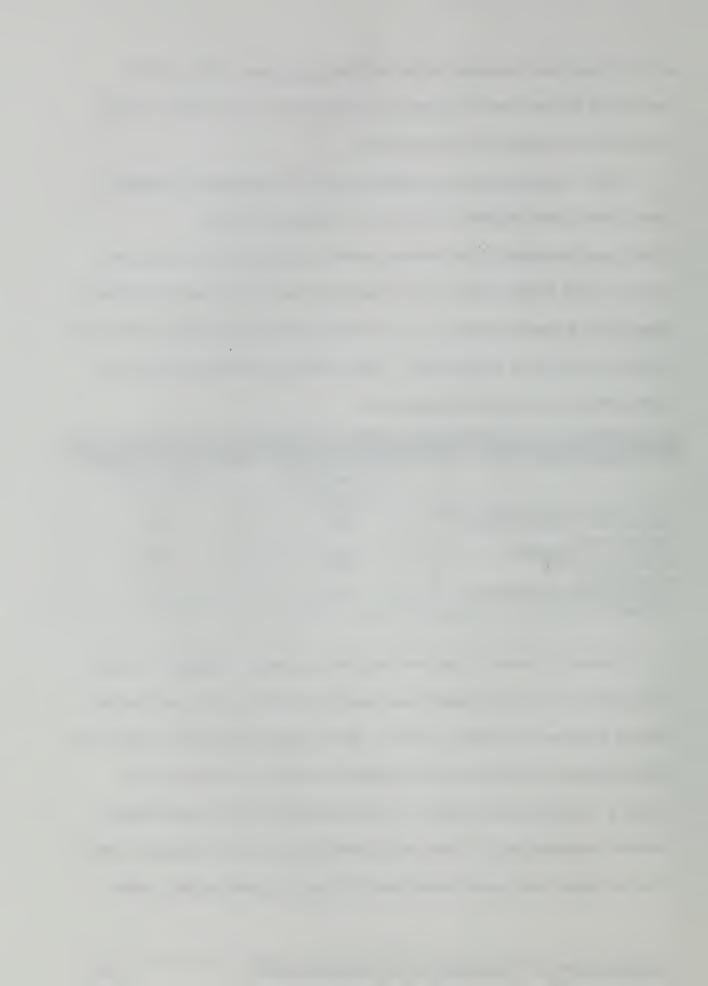
are in the most need of parental support and encouragement. Thus, the RFP emphasized the importance of outreach to parents in the implementation of state-funded academic support services programs.

School superintendents were asked to rate the effectiveness of strategies used in state-funded academic support services programs to inform parents/guardians about school year and summer school programs being offered during the 1998-1999 academic year, including summer. Survey respondents were asked to rate a specific strategy as very ineffective, somewhat ineffective, somewhat effective, very effective, or inapplicable. Table 8 below summarizes these results while controlling for inapplicable responses.

Table 8: Percent of survey respondents indicating parental outreach strategy was somewhat/very effective		
OUTREACH STRATEGY	PERCENT INDICATING SOMEWHAT/VERY EFFECTIVE	PERCENT INDICATING INAPPLICABLE
Face to face contact with parents/guardians	98.2%	7.6%
Information letters to parents/guardians about the program	95.2%	0%
Telephoning parents/guardians	92.7%	7.6%
Information sessions with parents/guardians	92.6%	19.5%
Newspaper announcements/stories about the program	71.7%	21%

Outreach to parents is hard work and time consuming. Face-to-face contact with parents and information letters were rated by survey respondents as the most effective strategies for outreach to parents. School districts also routinely telephoned parents/guardians of children who were absent from school year and summer programs. Parent information nights, regular conferences, parent/student/teacher contracts, homework kits, etc. were also employed as outreach strategies to parents. These strategies were geared toward helping the school district develop a more
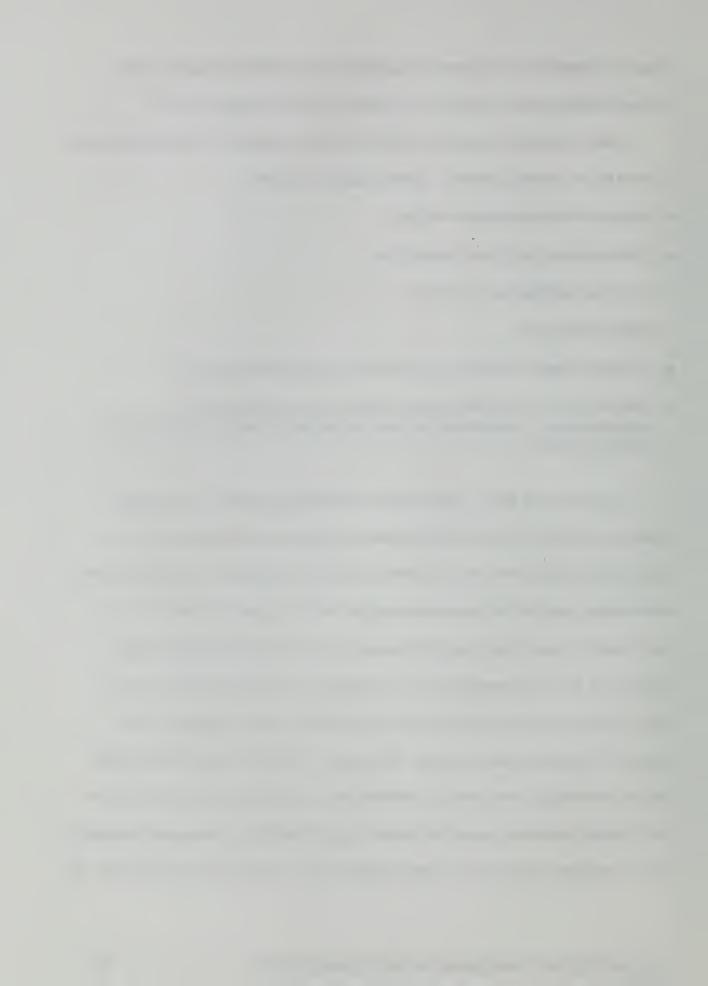
personal relationship with parents of students in state-funded academic support services programs and to provide the student with more support at home.

Grant applications submitted to DOE describe a number of different strategies to reach out to parents/guardians. Some examples include:

♦ Parent information/orientation nights.

♦ Weekly meeting with parents/guardians.

♦ Parent/student/teacher contracts.

♦ Home learning kits.

♦ Frequent progress reports on student needs and skill development.

♦ Requiring parents to submit a letter to the district of a decision by a parent/guardian to **not enroll** their child in the state-funded academic support services program.

During the site visits, program administrators discussed the importance of parental involvement in state-funded academic support services programs. One described the outreach effort as "the hardest thing" to accomplish. Another program administrator said that her district encouraged "lot's of outreach to parents." She found that the state-funded academic support services summer program helped parents that were concerned about the transition to high school of their 8th grade child. Another school district visited during the summer used a summer school counselor to improve communication with parents. Another program administrator said that her district used the spring conference as a vehicle for outreach to parents. Most districts conducted parent information nights about their state-funded academic support services programs and routinely called home if a student did not show up for
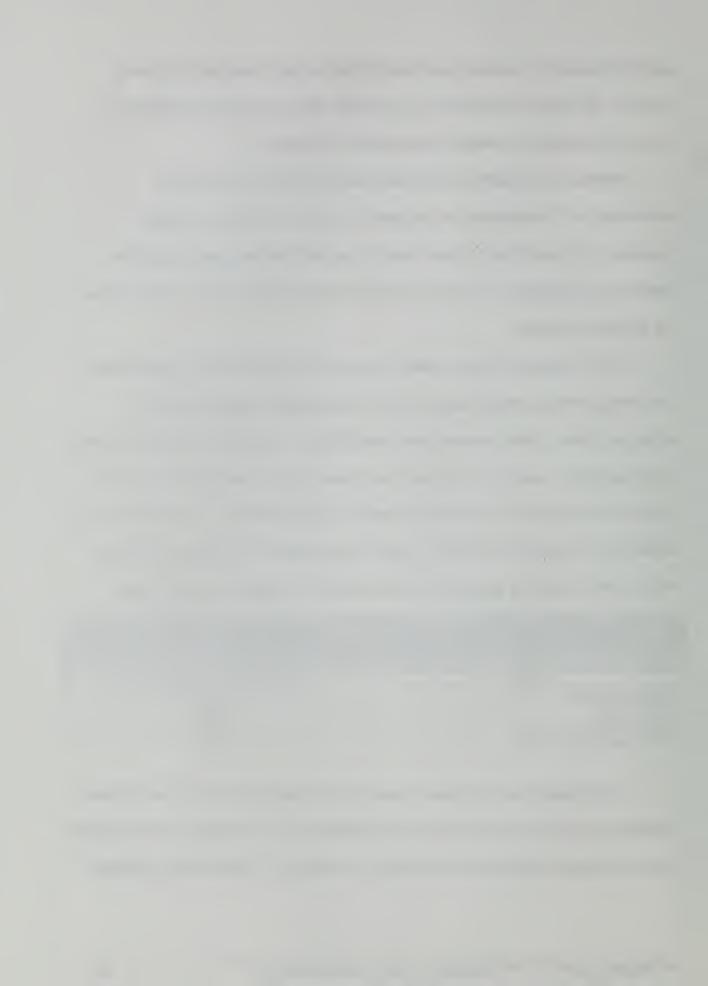
assigned classes and several used truant officers to track down tardy or absent students. One district visited during the summer did not provide transportation in order to encourage more face-to-face contact with parents.

Parental involvement proved to be a difficult challenge for program administrators. For example, one program administrator stated in a program evaluation of a school year program that, "Parent commitments were high at the beginning of the program, but there was a shift in their attitudes and involvement as the program continued."

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the staff primarily responsible for contacting parents/guardians about state-funded academic support services programs. Table 9 below summarizes these findings. Program coordinators of state-funded academic support services programs were primarily responsible for contact with parents/guardians. Principals also played an important role in parental outreach, especially in urban school districts. Teachers and guidance counselors were least likely to contact parents about state-funded academic support services programs.

Table 9: Percent of survey respondents indicating staff was primarily responsible for contacting parents/guardians	
STAFF	PERCENT RESPONDING YES
Program coordinator	80.7%
School principal	71.2%
Student's teacher	53.9%
Student's guidance counselor	41.4%

The important role principals played in contacting parents about state-funded academic support services programs is consistent with the changing role of principals under the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA). Under MERA, principals

were given far more responsibility for managing their schools and are being held accountable for improving the academic performance of their students.

Fewer than half of survey respondents, 41.4%, indicated that guidance counselors were primarily responsible for contacting parents/guardians about state-funded academic support services programs. Guidance counselors may be an underutilized resource in conducting outreach to parents and their expertise in working with students and families might be helpful to program administrators, principals, and teachers.
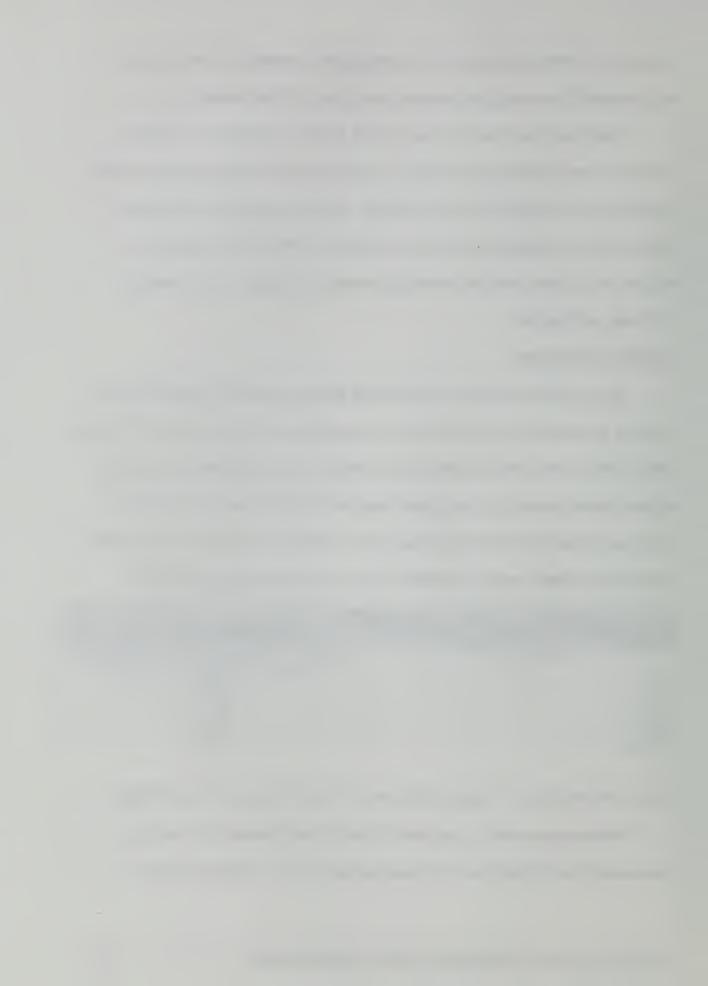
Key District Differences

Survey respondents from urban school districts reported that principals were primarily responsible for contact with parents/guardians at a higher rate, 94.7%, than other types of school districts (see table 10 below). During the site visits to urban school districts, several program administrators commented on the important role principals played in recruitment and outreach. However, one program administrator noted that principals have a full plate and are "not worried about the summer."

Table 10: Survey respondents by district type indicating principals were primarily responsible for parental contact	
DISTRICT TYPE	PERCENT RESPONDING THAT PRINCIPAL WAS PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTACT
Urban	94.7%
Suburban	68.6%
Rural	84.0%
Charter	50.0%
Vocational	33.3%

STAFF RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Survey respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of a variety of strategies to recruit staff to work in state-funded academic support services
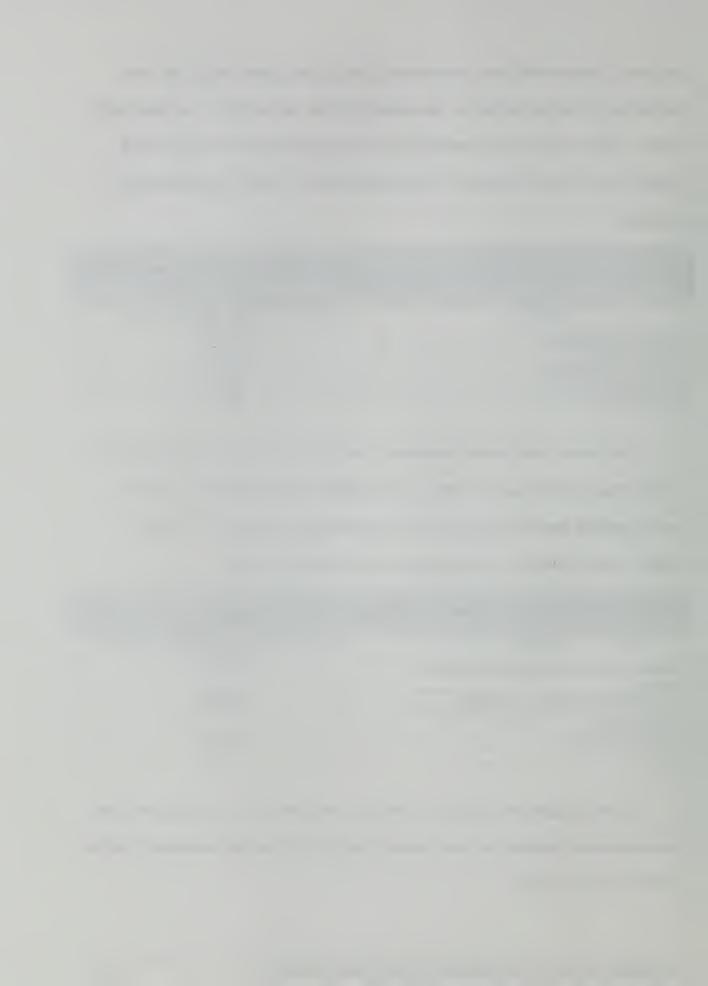
programs. Respondents were asked to indicate if a particular strategy was very ineffective, somewhat ineffective, somewhat effective, very effective, or inapplicable. Table 11 below presents the percentage of survey respondents indicating that a specific strategy was somewhat or very effective while controlling for inapplicable responses.

Table 11 Percent of survey respondents indicating that recruiting strategy was somewhat or very effective in recruiting staff	
STRATEGY	PERCENT INDICATING SOMEWHAT/VERY EFFECTIVE
Principal recommendation	92.4%
Formal job posting	89.7%
Teacher recommendation	85.5%
Newspaper advertisement	79.5%
Union publication	46.7%

The survey asked superintendents to rate the importance of various selection criteria used to select staff for state-funded academic support services. Table 12 below identifies the percentage of survey respondents indicating that a specific criterion was somewhat or very important in the selection of staff.

Table 12 Percent of survey respondents indicating criteria was somewhat or very important in selecting staff	
CRITERIA	PERCENT INDICATING SOMEWHAT/VERY IMPORTANT
Previous experience working with low performing students	91.7%
Previous teaching experience in the district	91.6%
Previous experience working in academic support services programs	69.6%
Staff recommendations	57.4%
Seniority	15.1%

Survey respondents provided a variety of other criteria for selecting teachers for state-funded academic support services programs in the open response question of the survey including:
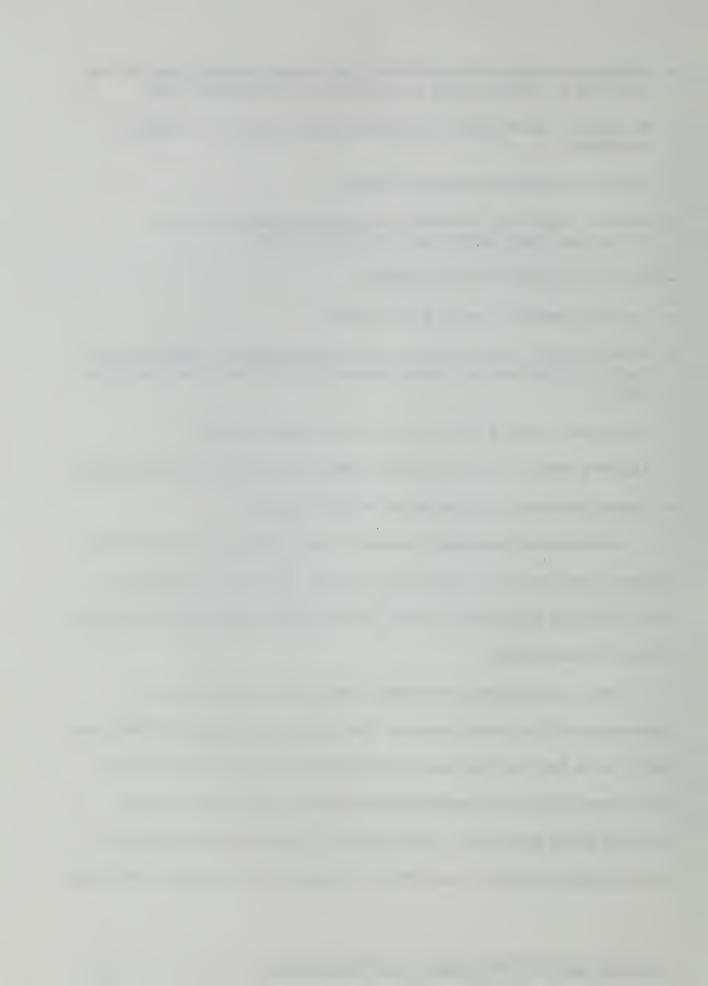
- Willingness to design and implement an individualized intervention program with responsive and diagnostic data (we provided a one day training in this).

- Participated in professional development targeted to MCAS. Knowledge of frameworks.

- Ability to make learning active and enjoyable.

- Education, experience, connection with student and parents, ability to communicate clearly, establish rapport, spotless record.

- Desire to be involved in a new endeavor.

- Availability beyond the regular school day/year.

- Priority was given to teachers in the district trained [already] in LINKS Strategies, the Collins Writing Method, Sapaier Course Methods; these are initiatives in the district.

- Caring teachers who enjoy working with disadvantaged students.

- Teacher's desire to work as member of a team; team approach benefits students.

- Content expertise, i.e. subject teacher or reading teacher.

Several survey respondents commented that recruiting teachers was difficult. One respondent wrote, "We needed more teachers. The best want a break and won't work for the $24 per hour we offer!" Another stated, "Recruitment was difficult. We could not be selective."

Program administrators interviewed during summer visits gave mixed responses to staff recruitment questions. One program administrator said that it was hard to recruit staff in part because of the late timing of the grant announcement. Another said that his district had problems hiring staff because many students registered late for the program. Another said that, given the size of the district's program, teacher recruitment was difficult, a " long and involved process." Providing
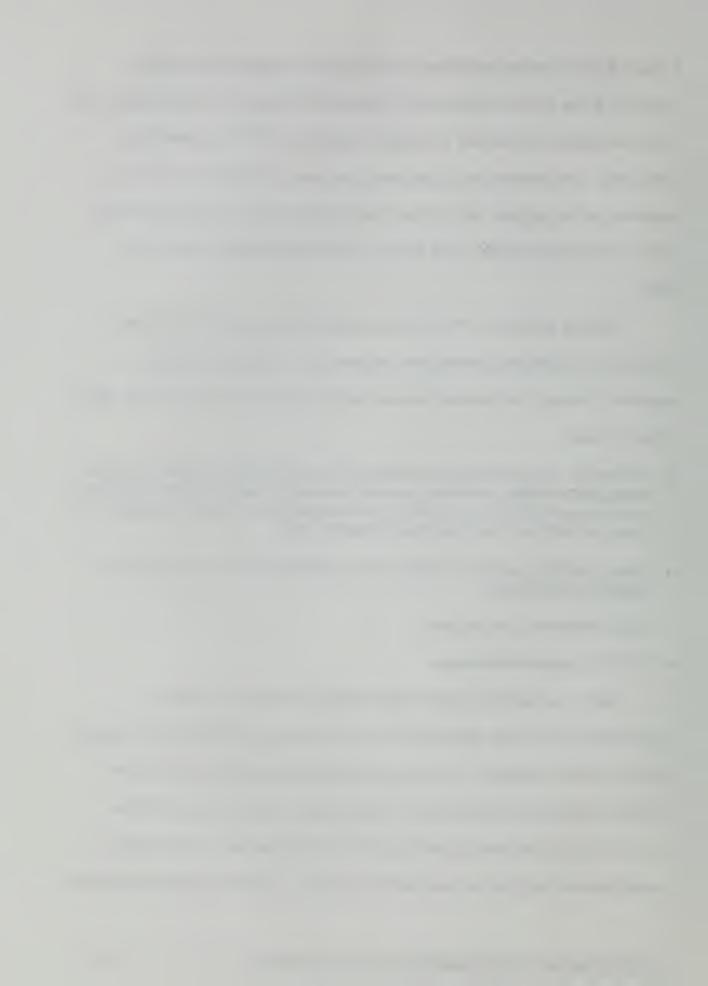
Fridays off during the summer served as an effective incentive to recruit staff according to one program administrator interviewed. One program administrator said that it was harder to recruit staff at the high school level than at the elementary school level. She said that the "higher the grade level, the more difficult to staff." However, another program administrator said that she had more teachers seeking positions than jobs available. Most districts visited hired certified staff from the district.

Sixty-one percent (61.7%) of survey respondents indicated that staff was provided with professional development opportunities. Survey respondents described a variety of professional development opportunities provided to their staffs. These included:

♦ Workshops: multi-day sessions to design and implement the program; to review strategies for reading and writing; to learn intervention and diagnostic techniques; to plan sessions to focus on math skills and strategies for motivating students; to focus on portfolios, rubrics, and the frameworks, etc.

♦ Weekly meetings during the session, with project leaders and [consultants] to prepare writing classes.

♦ Basic orientation to the program.

♦ Funding to attend conferences.

During the site visits, program administrators described a variety of professional development strategies implemented in state-funded academic support services summer programs. One program administrator said that her staff held "regular meetings around instruction." One program administrator said that her district conducted one week of training prior to the commencement of the state-funded academic support services summer program. Another program administrator

said her district held three days of professional development before the program began. One program administrator described her district's professional development activity as an "initial meeting in April with staff" and that staff development time was not built into the program. Two program administrators said that their districts did not much with professional development because staff received a lot of training during the academic year and in part because curriculum work has been ongoing.
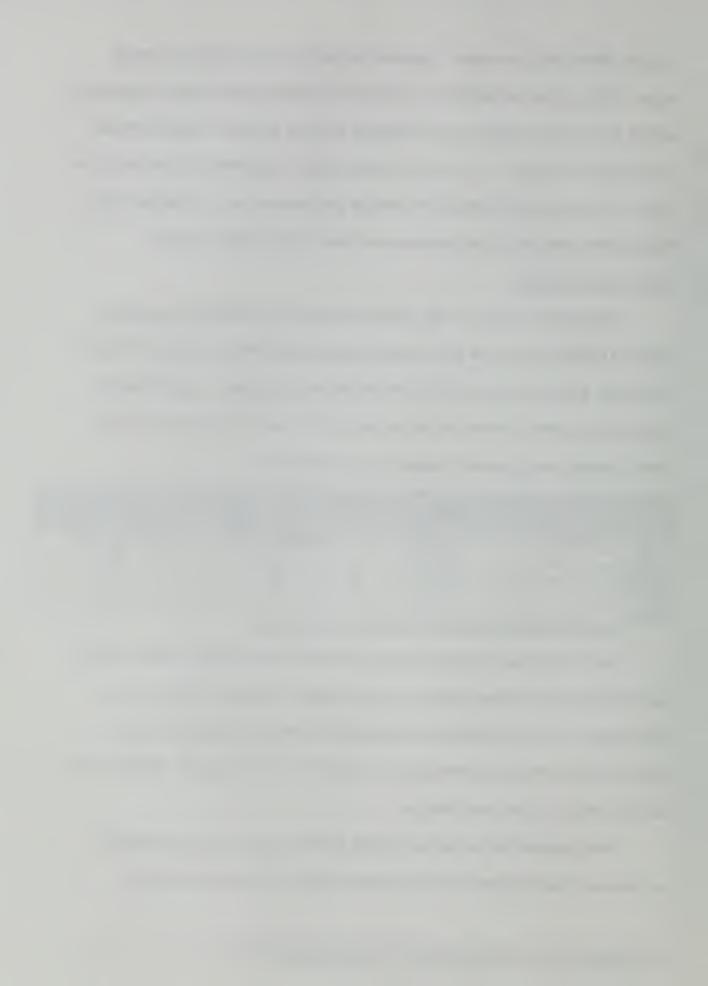
Key District Differences

Remarkably, 100% of survey respondents from rural districts indicated that they had sufficient resources to hire staff compared to 84.2% from urban, 83.3% from vocational, 80% from charter school, and 76.3% from suburban. Table 13 below presents the average number of staff, as reported by survey respondents, hired to work in state-funded academic support services programs.

Table 13: Average number of staff hired by district type			
SCHOOL DISTRICT	TEACHERS	ADMINISTRATORS	SUPPORT STAFF*
Urban	132.4	6.8	13.1
Vocational	7.1	0.8	1.8
Suburban	16.6	1.2	1.5
Rural	11	1.7	2.0
Charter	11	1	3

*NOTE: Some districts included peer tutors in their support staff figure.

Only 30% of survey respondents reported that teaching staff in state-funded academic support services programs were evaluated. However, 80% of survey respondents from charter schools indicated that teaching staff was evaluated compared to 33.3% in vocational districts, 29.3% in suburban districts, 25.8% in rural districts, and 21.1% in urban districts.

Respondents from suburban districts, 75.6%, were more likely to provide professional opportunities to staff (see table 14 below). No charter schools

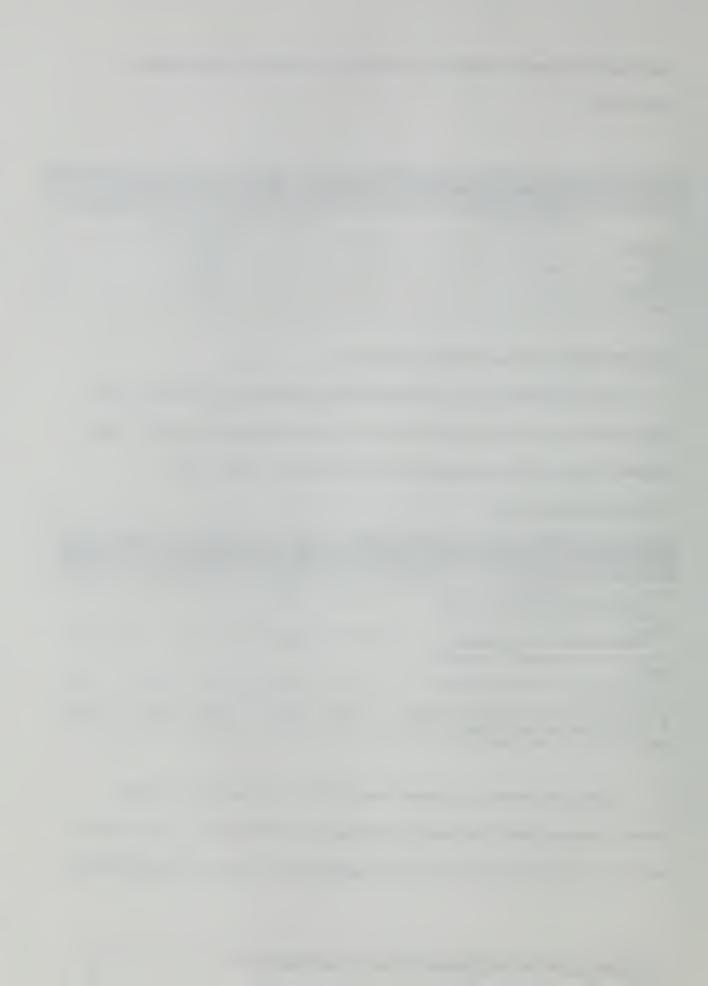respondents indicated that staff was provided with professional development opportunities.

Table 14: Percentage of school districts by type providing professional development to staff	
SCHOOL DISTRICT	PERCENT PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Suburban	75.6%
Urban	63.2%
Rural	61.3%
Vocational	44.4%
Charter	0%

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SERVICES

School superintendents were asked to rank order from one to five, with one being the best way, two the second best way, etc. possible ways that state-funded academic support services programs could be improved. Table 15 below summarizes these results.

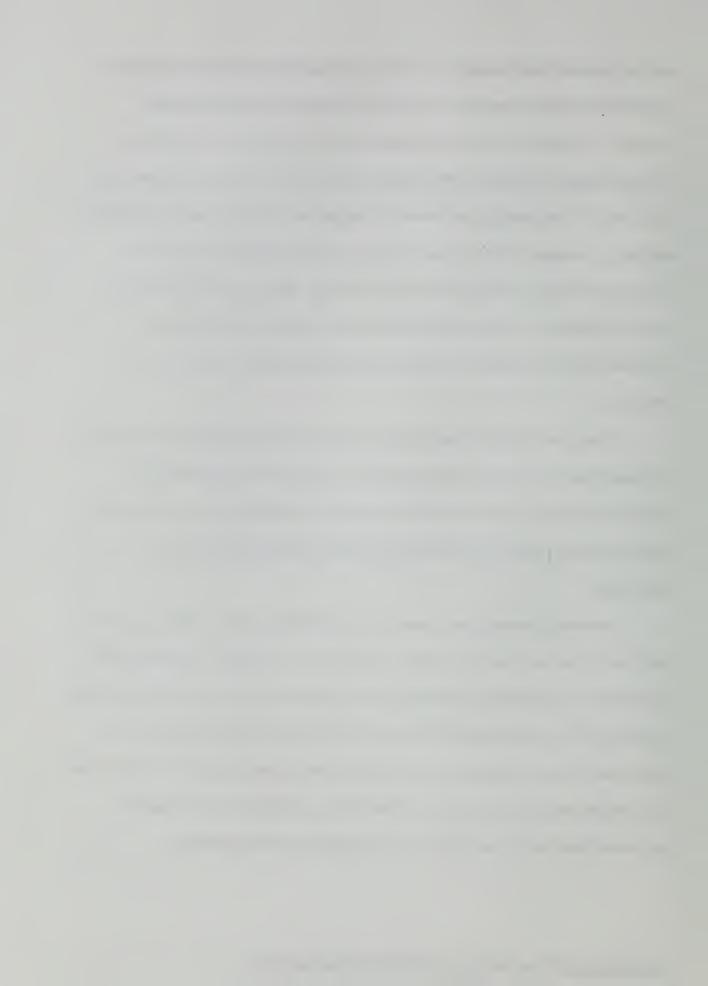| Table 15: Rank order from one to five suggested ways to improve state-funded academic support service programs					
Rank Order	1	2	3	4	5
1. Program models that improve student test scores should be identified and shared with schools.	54.5%	26.4%	10.9%	6.4%	1.8%
2. Funding for academic support services programs should be provided in the foundation budget.	30.3%	24.8%	20.3%	16.5%	8.3%
3. There should be more technical assistance provided to schools.	4.6%	15.6%	38.5%	23.9%	17.4%
4. There should be fewer reporting requirements.	7.3%	17.4%	15.6%	35.8%	23.9%
5. School districts receiving state grants should be required to mandate student attendance.	4.6%	16.5%	16.5%	15.6%	46.8%

Survey respondents expressed strong interest in learning from program models in school districts that seem to contribute to an improvement in student test scores. Two out of the top three ranked suggestions for improvement addressed the

need for more technical assistance. DOE has begun to do this through a series of workshops throughout the state on state-funded academic support services programs. A problem with collecting data, however, has slowed down a more thorough analysis of program effectiveness by DOE staff. This is due in part to the data collection and reporting requirements established by DOE. For many districts, designing a program which included a pre- and post-test and detailed student performance data was difficult this first time around. School districts need more technical assistance in this area and DOE should consider conducting more extensive program evaluations to identify programs that seem to be making a difference.
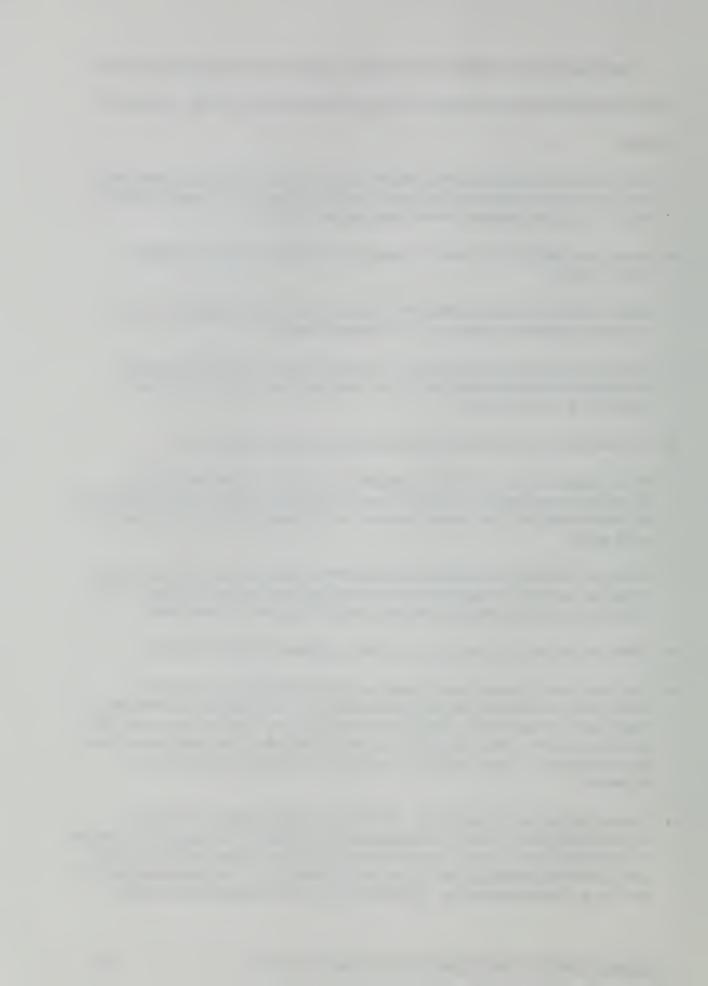
Folding the funding for the program into the foundation budget was ranked as the second best way to improve the program. This may be a response to the uneasiness felt by school officials with the possibility that state funding for academic support services programs might be cut off before good programs can be established.

Interestingly ranked last as a way to improve the program was the suggestion that state grants be linked to mandatory attendance. Although survey respondents expressed strong interest in mandating student attendance, the low ranking of linking the state grant to student attendance requirements might indicate among survey respondents that the decision to mandate attendance is one local school officials and policymakers need to make and that state funds supporting academic support programs should not be contingent upon mandated student attendance.

Many survey respondents offered many comments and suggestions on how state-funded academic support services programs could be improved. Comments included:
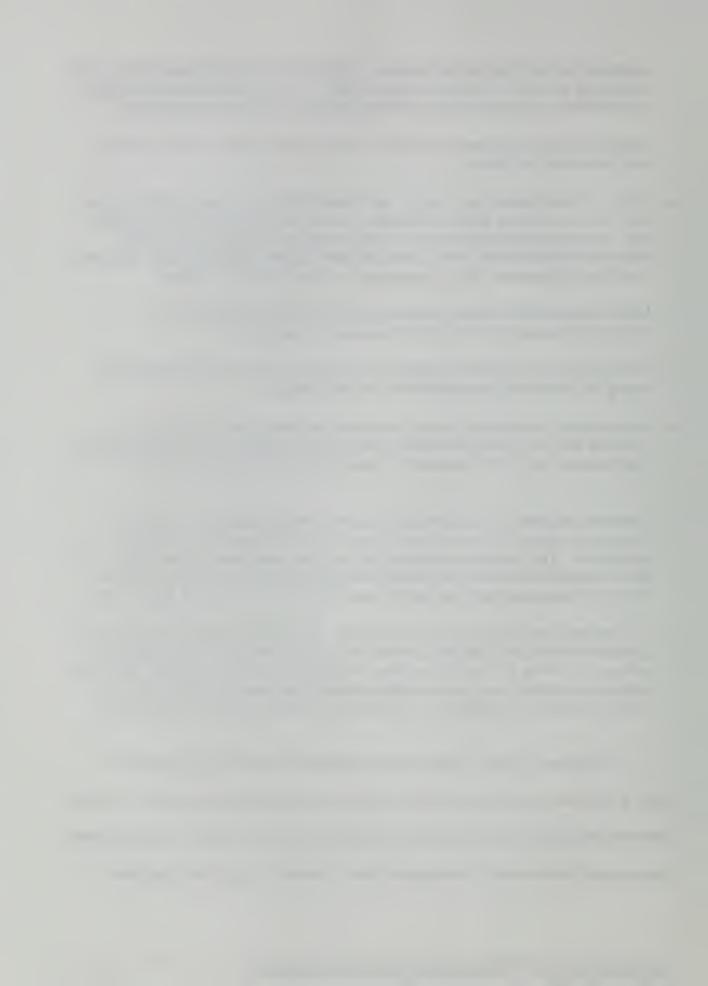
◆ Every district has students who perform below average. The focus needs to be on this population not just MCAS performance. Students who barley "passed" MCAS should get attention as well as those who "failed."

◆ Allow more flexibility for schools to design and adapt programs to student's specific needs.

◆ State [should] provide standard pre- and post-tests by grade level that makes sense for programs ranging from 2-15 weeks in length.

◆ Program should be implemented on a permanent basis. Funding should be automatically made available so support programs are up and running at the beginning of the school year.

◆ Hiring teachers to be involved with parent programs for information.

◆ This program has to be viewed as ongoing for students underperforming in MCAS/other standardized tests and/or at the classroom level. The program must be implemented on a permanent basis rather than subject to funding available to grant writing.

◆ Funding should be available as an entitlement subject, not competitive. Funds should be available in September without lengthy grant review in midyear. The guidelines and accountability (pre- and post-testing) are commendable.

◆ There was not enough funding to run terrific programs at all school sites.

◆ The district and the state must convey a positive attitude and approach to participating in extended day and year programs. They cannot be viewed as the "same old summer school" required because of failure. Also students must be supported and then held responsible at the Middle School and High School level for their learning. This is a difficult concept for the teachers, parents, and students.

◆ Current program is too traditional. It does not reflect research on effective remedial programs. Flaw 1) Programs are after-school! We submitted to state an in-school enrichment model; team-teaching classroom based, almost universal participation for all middle and high school [students]. Our model was rejected in favor of a after-school model—resulting in low very low participation among

middle school and high school students. Flaw 2) No funding allowed for computer technology software to accelerate remediation. Computer delivered remediation is motivating—software provides excellent reports for students and parents.

♦ Funding delay equals program delays. This causes programs to be pushed to less favorable time periods.

♦ Let's not "throw money" at tutoring. Let's extend the school day and school year and train our teachers better—mandatory training for teachers three weeks per year. Need to concentrate efforts to achieve this so all students will receive instruction in all subjects daily…good teachers are not wanting to tutor. They are busy planning lessons, taking workshops, participating on committees.

♦ More incentives for voc-tech students: credit, stipends, field trips, more community involvement, i.e. gifts to students by merchants.

♦ Allow funding to support the integration of academic and vocational instruction during the normal day's operations in voc-tech schools.

♦ Automatically give districts money to operate programs rather than having to compete and jump through increasing hoops to get money. If the state is going to mandate teaching to the frameworks, they should provide sufficient money to do so.

♦ We were delighted to receive the funding which enabled us to provide a high quality summer reading instructional "camp" to 84 low performing students, grades K-4. The funds were sufficient for us to provide a low student/teacher ratio which enabled the learning for students and provided an optimal instructional situation. We would like to be able to count on this funding for a 3-5 year cycle.

♦ The reporting requirements are too complex. They are indicative of a mis-trust of local districts implying that districts would/could not use the funds responsibly without submitting student ID numbers, pre- [and] post-test scores, etc. Electronic submission of data is not a reasonable mandate because not all districts have access to email, technology etc. The grant process is extremely burdensome.

During the site visits, program administrators interviewed expressed their general satisfaction with state-funded academic support services programs. Program administrators would like to have earlier notification of grant awards to facilitate better planning and recruitment of students and staff. Several program administrators
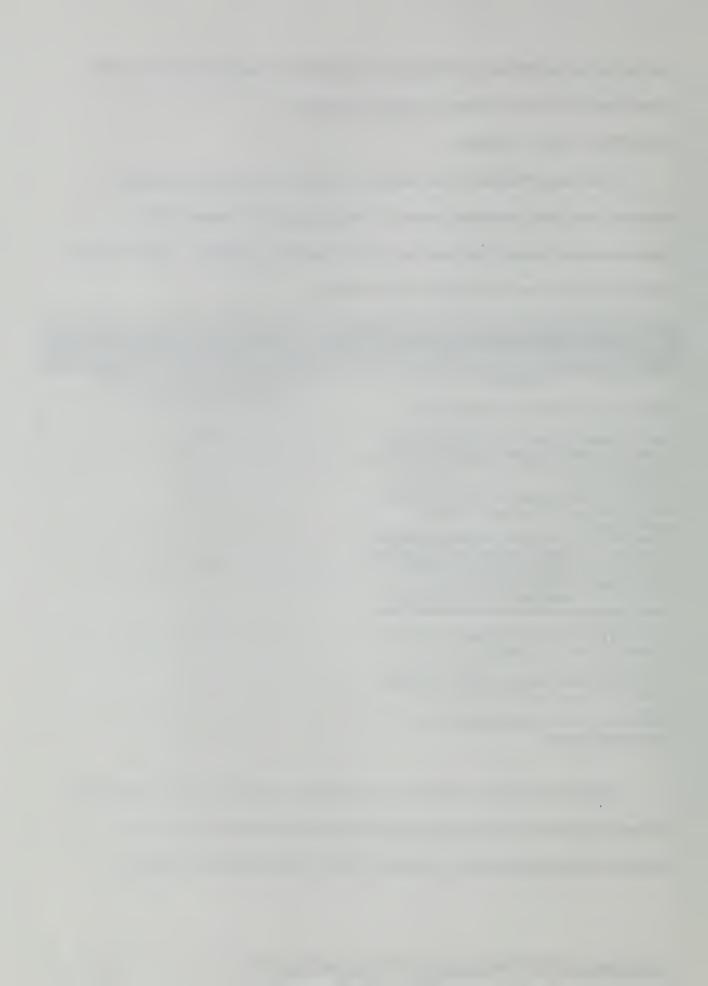
commented on the difficulty of ending the school year and beginning the new state-funded academic support summer program right away.

IMPORTANT POLICY ISSUES

School superintendents were asked to indicate if they strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, somewhat agreed, or strongly agreed to several policy statements about state-funded academic support services programs. Table 16 below summarizes the survey responses for this question.

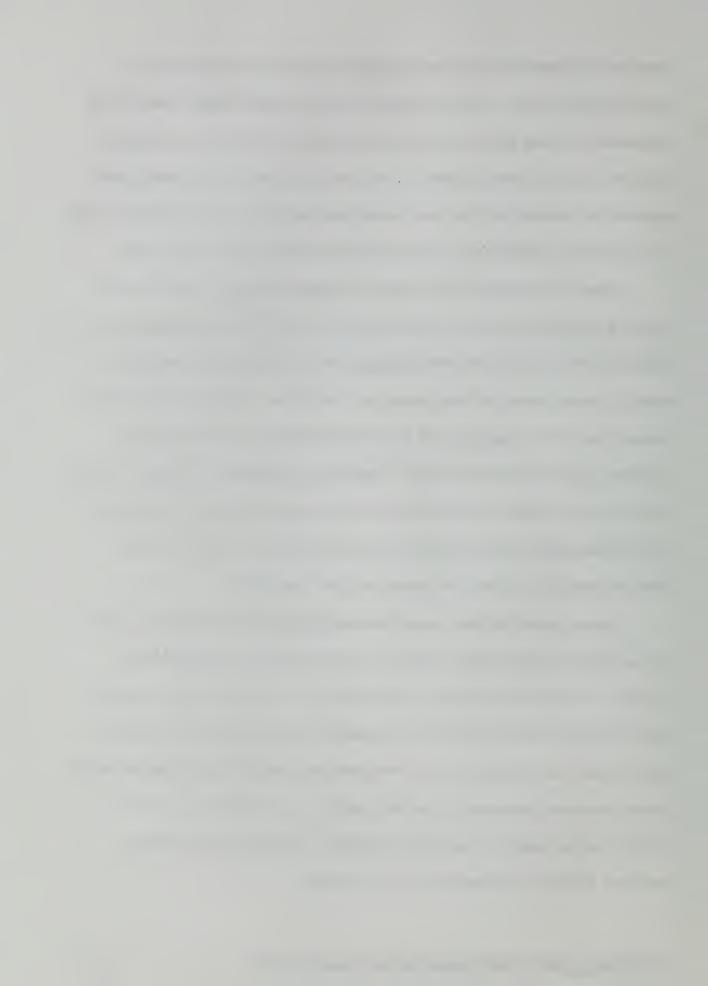| Table 16: Percent responding somewhat agree/strongly agree to statements about state-funded academic support services.	
STATEMENT	PERCENT RESPONDING SOMEWHAT AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE
Students need to develop better test-taking skills.	98.7%
Academic support programs should focus on content knowledge included in the state curriculum frameworks.	89.9%
Summer school should be mandatory for students with low MCAS scores.	79.8%
A high school diploma should not be denied to a student with low MCAS scores if they have not received academic support.	69.3%
To meet the MCAS performance requirement established by the state, we will need to add hours to the school day.	69.3%
Academic support programs should focus exclusively on improving basic reading and math skills.	60.2%
Our school district would continue to provide academic support programs to students even without state funding for such programs.	57.2%
The current school year provides sufficient time to meet the MCAS performance standards required for high school graduation.	25.4%
The foundation budget formula provides sufficient funds for academic support programs, including summer school.	18.8%
Academic support programs should only focus on improving MCAS scores.	18.7%

The findings here are interesting. A significant number of survey respondents somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that students need to develop better test-taking skills. Yet, only 18.7% indicate agreement with the

statement that state-funded academic support programs should focus only on improving MCAS scores. This is in sharp contrast to an earlier finding (see table 3) that ranked improving MCAS as the number one reason for offering state-funded academic support services programs. This also contradicts an earlier finding that suggests that the most important way state-funded academic support programs could be improved is by identifying program models that improve student test scores.

Survey respondents indicated that state-funded academic support services programs should focus on the content included in the curriculum framework, but almost 40% of survey respondents disagreed with the statement that programs should focus exclusively on basic reading and math skills. Three-quarters of survey respondents (74.6%) disagreed with the statement that the current school year provides students with sufficient time to meet MCAS performance standards. This is consistent with an earlier finding indicated strong support by survey respondents for offering state-funded academic support services programs to students to add additional instructional time to the school day/year (see table 3).

Survey respondents also overwhelmingly disagreed with the statement that the foundation budget provides sufficient funds for academic support services programs. This raises an interesting funding issue. If funds for academic support services programs were rolled into the foundation budget program, school districts would have more discretion over how the funds are used at the local level and might identify alternative strategies for providing students with remedial services. By providing funds outside the foundation budget for academic support services programs, DOE has more say over program design.
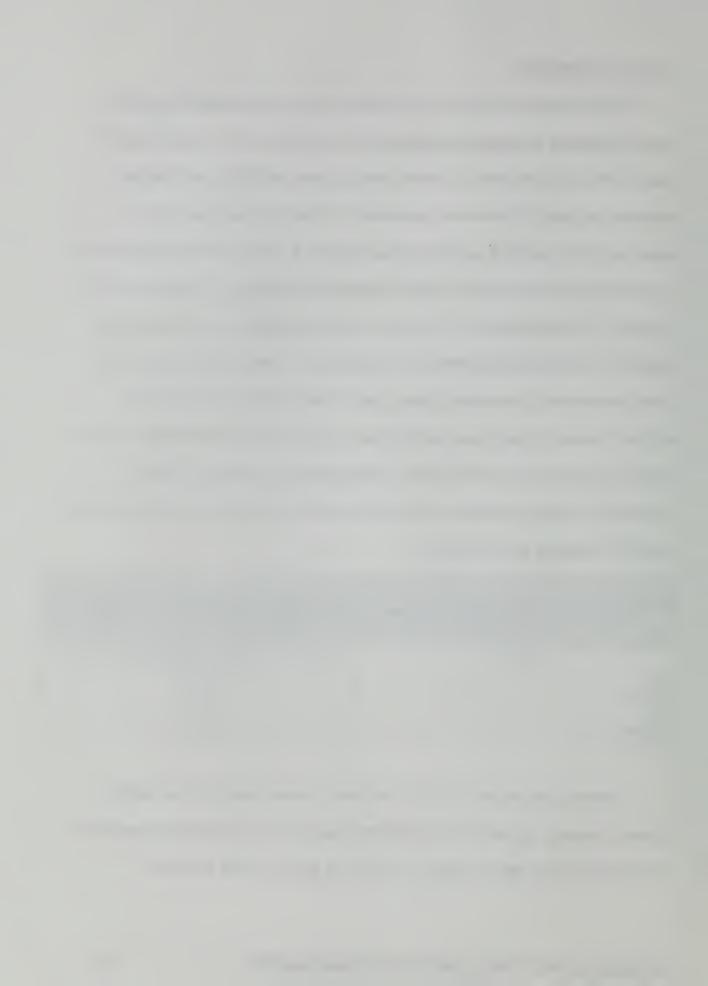
Key District Differences

One interesting finding was the percent of survey respondents that either
<u>strongly</u> <u>disagreed</u> or <u>somewhat disagreed</u> with the statement "The current school
year provides sufficient time for most students to meet the MCAS performance
standards required for high school graduation." Table 17 below breaks down
responses to this particular question by district type. A total of 93.8% of urban school
superintendents surveyed either strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed with this
statement. This compares to 74.7% of all survey respondents who either strongly
disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the statement. These results indicate that
survey respondents from urban school systems believe that they do not have
sufficient time during the school year to prepare students for the MCAS test. The low
percentage of survey respondents from vocational school districts who either
somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement is surprising given the low MCAS
scores in vocational school districts.

Table 17: Percent of survey respondents by district type either somewhat disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement "The current school year provides sufficient time for most students to meet the MCAS performance standards required for high school graduation".	
DISTRICT	PERCENT SOMEWHAT DISAGREEING/STRONGLY DISAGREEING
Urban	93.8%
Charter	80%
Rural	77.5%
Suburban	69.2%
Vocational	42.1%

Seventy-nine percent (79.8%) of all survey respondents either somewhat
agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Summer school should be mandatory
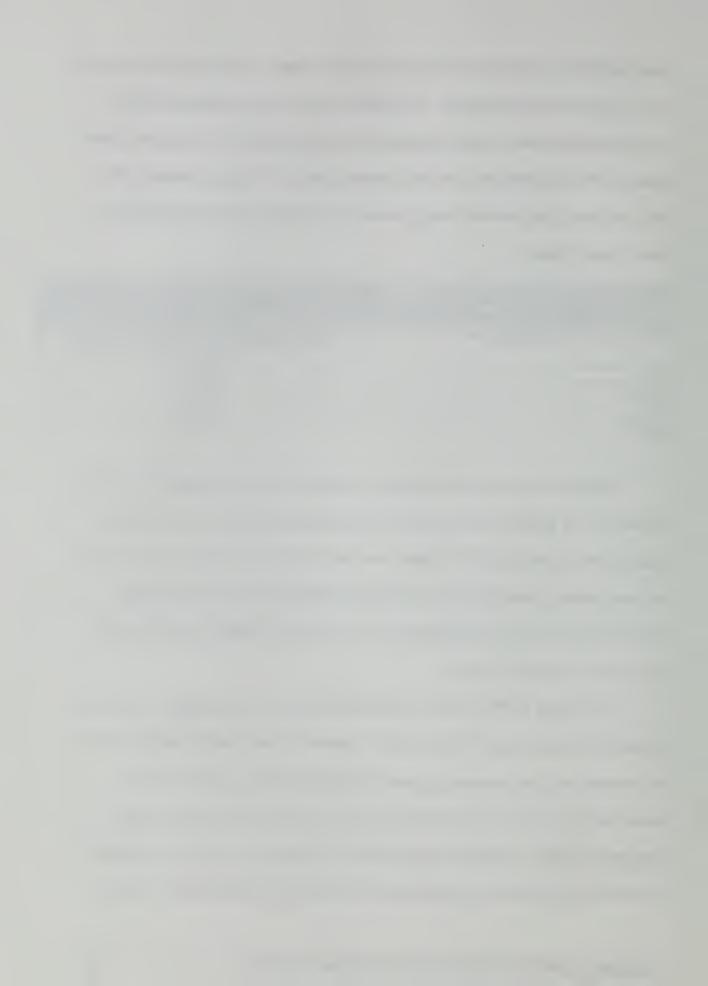for students with low MCAS scores. As Table 18 shows, 94.8% of survey

respondents from urban school districts were more likely to either somewhat agree or strongly agree with this statement. The percentage of survey respondents from vocational districts also somewhat agreed or strongly agreed at a higher rate to this statement than respondents from other districts (89.5%). This is consistent with previous findings that indicate strong interest in mandatory summer schools from survey respondents.

Table 18: Percent of survey respondents by district type either somewhat agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement "Summer school should be mandatory for students with low MCAS scores."	
DISTRICT	PERCENT SOMEWHAT AGREEING/STRONGLY AGREEING
Urban	94.8%
Vocational	89.5%
Rural	80.0%
Suburban	75.0%
Charter	60.0%

Over half of survey respondents (57.2%) either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Our school district would continue to provide academic support services programs to students even without state funding for such programs." However, survey respondents from vocational districts either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with this statement (73.7%) at a much higher rate than survey respondents from other districts.

Finally, only 18.8% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement "The foundation budget formula provides sufficient funds for academic support services programs, including summer schools." Survey respondents from urban school districts and suburban school districts strongly disagreed at higher rates than respondents from other school districts. Eighty-two percent (82.4%) of survey respondents from urban school districts and 71.8% of

survey respondents from suburban school districts <u>strongly disagreed</u> with this statement. Thus, providing funding outside of the foundation budget for academic support services programs is an important factor to sustaining these programs over time.
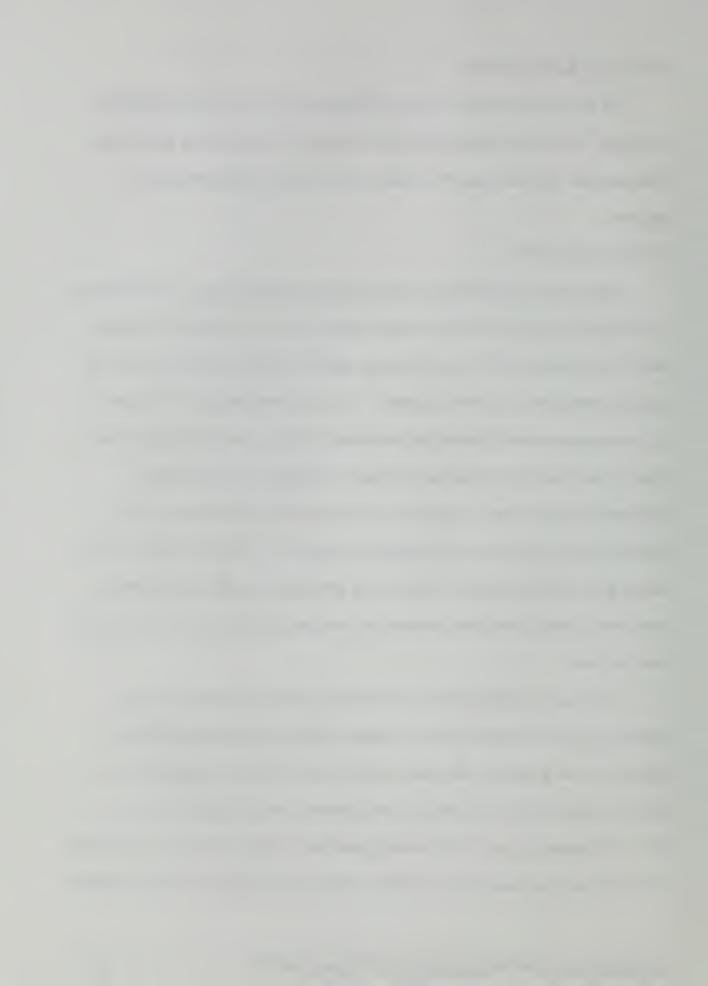
SECTION 4: IMPLICATIONS

The first year of any new program is fraught with numerous implementation challenges. This section discusses the implications of the data on the continuing implementation and management of state-funded academic support services programs.

STUDENT SELECTION

Even though standardized test scores played a significant role in the selection of students, school districts relied on other criterion to select students for services. Teacher recommendations, parent requests, and course grades were also used by program administrators to select students. Thus, one important issue is whether or not the students enrolled in state-funded academic support services programs were those in most need of remedial help. Certainly all students can benefit from additional academic support. However, the main purpose of these funds was to provide remedial instruction to low performing students. These are students most in danger of not meeting the state's high-stakes graduation requirement and school districts must ensure that these students are the ones receiving services through this grant program.

A thorough analysis of data currently being collected by DOE will help in determining the performance level of students served by state-funded academic support services programs. According to DOE, school districts projected serving almost 50,000 students in school year and summer school programs during the 1998-1999 academic year. DOE is working with school districts that received grants in FY99 to complete data collection and to determine the number of students served
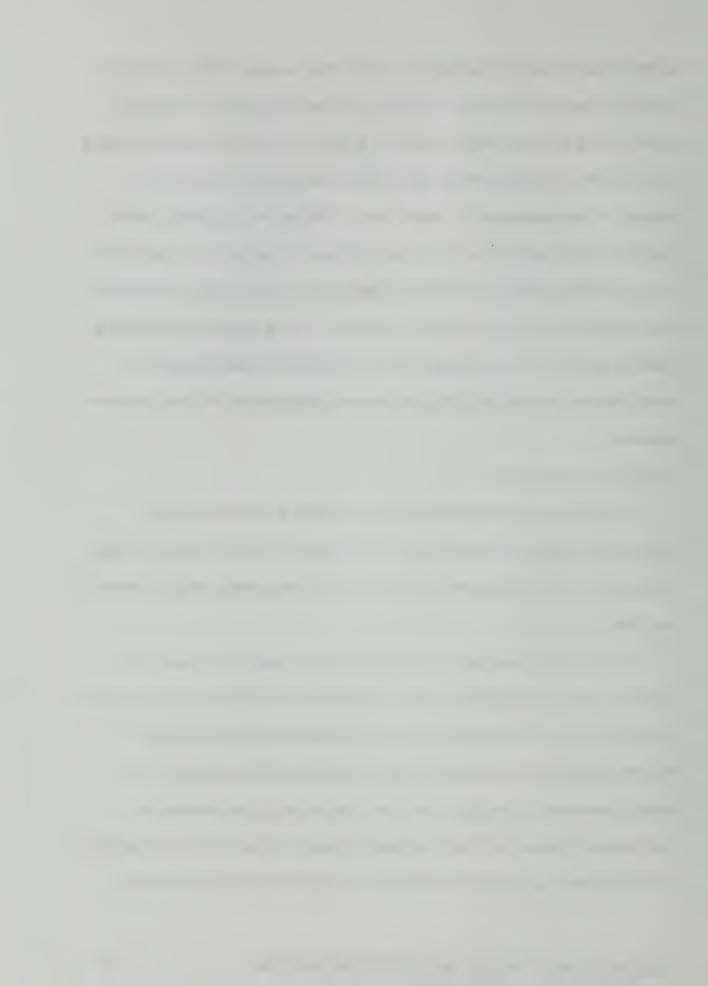
and the amount of hours of additional instruction they received. DOE's preliminary analysis of data from the Individual Tutoring and Reading program, for example, reveals that the 28 school districts receiving grants for this program projected serving 1978 students. Of those students, 1911 actually received services and 1216 received the required amount of contact hours. DOE has not completed a similar analysis of school year and summer school programs. This analysis will help DOE and school districts determine if those students most in need of help are enrolling in state-funded academic support services programs. Future decisions about funding academic support services programs should consider the success local school districts have in targeting, recruiting, and retaining students most in need of remedial assistance.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Targeting the right students is just the first step. A more challenging implementation issue is finding the right mix of carrots and sticks that keep students coming to school year and summer programs so that they receive additional remedial instruction.

School districts seemed to struggle with finding ways to encourage and motivate students to participate in state-funded academic support services programs. Programs were "sold" to students and parents by administrators by providing students with small student/teacher ratios, individual attention, and more active learning environments. Program completion data will help in determining the effectiveness of these incentives in motivating students to attend and complete state-funded academic support services programs. Technical assistance in this area
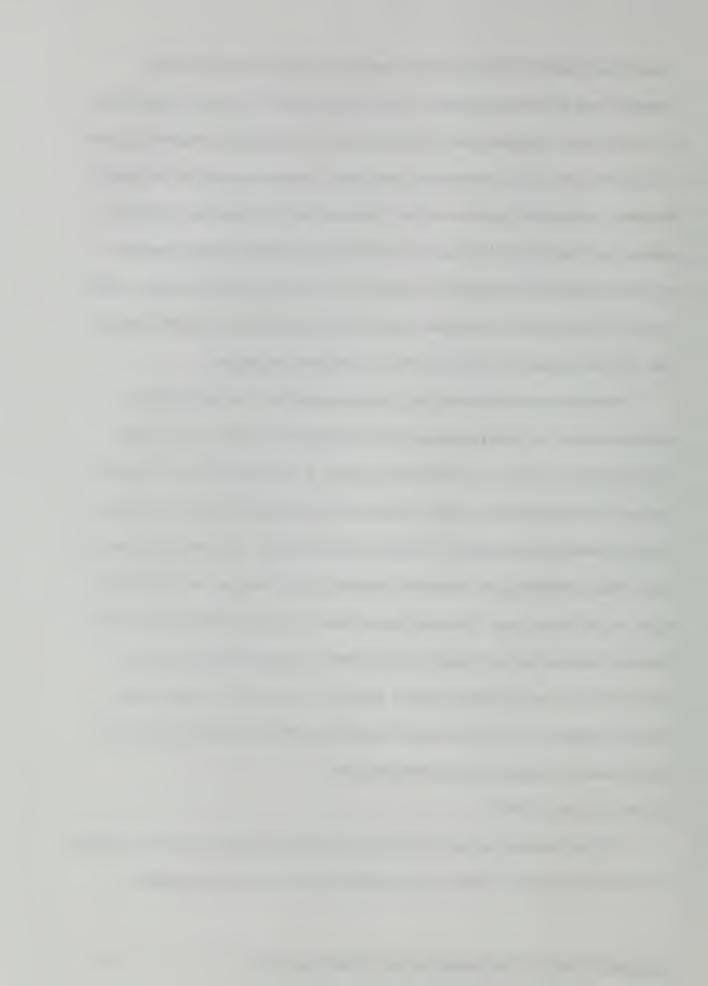
should be provided to school districts so that they can learn from successful strategies used to motivate students. School districts should continue to experiment with "wrap around" programs and the coordination of state-funded academic support services with other local non-academic programs to reduce competition for students. Moreover, students and parents, as the consequences of not passing the MCAS become real, need to be convinced that state-funded academic support services programs can provide the additional help to improve individual MCAS scores. In the long run, the high-stakes consequences of not passing MCAS may prove to be the most effective motivation a student needs to complete the program.

Perhaps the most important policy issue is whether or not state-funded academic support services programs should be mandated. Survey respondents indicated a strong interest in mandating programs. It is unclear if this is a "knee jerk" reaction to the pressure felt by school officials to improve MCAS scores in the face of new accountability requirements. For some school districts, mandating attendance in state-funded academic support services programs might make sense. For others, it might not be the way to go. Mandating attendance may pose legal barriers as well. Requiring students to attend state-funded academic support services programs should not been seen as a magic bullet. Instead, consideration of such a policy should be viewed in the larger context of developing effective district improvement plans focused on helping low performing students.

INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

For the most part, survey respondents indicated that they had sufficient funds to hire instructional staff. State-funded academic support services programs
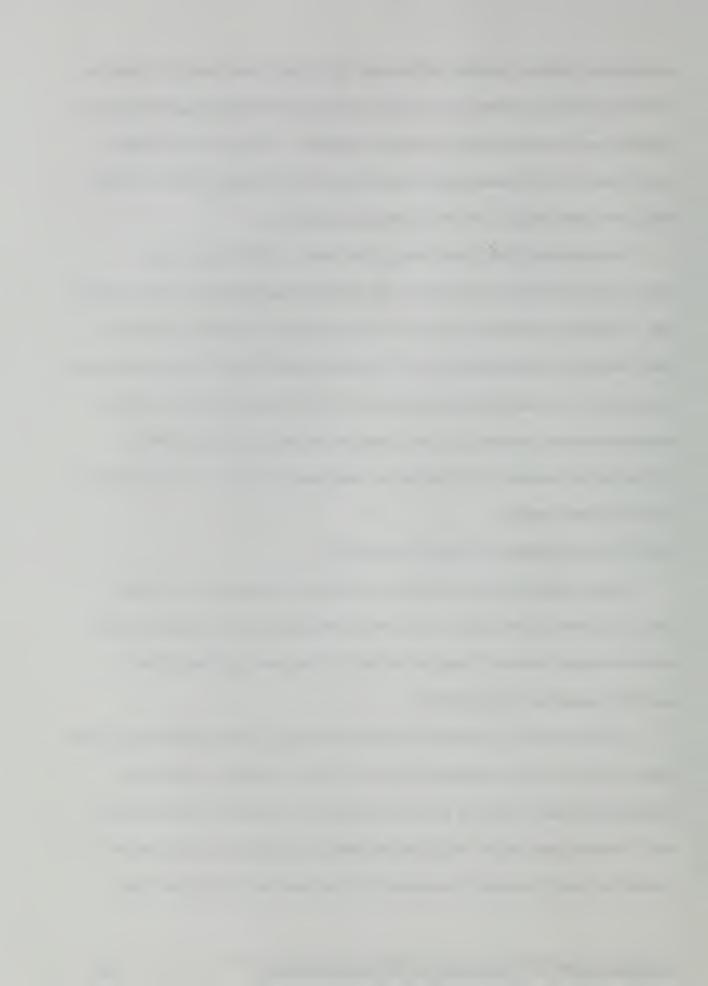
overwhelming relied on certified staff from the district to provide services to students. However, recruiting qualified staff to teach in state-fundedacademic support services programs may be problematic for local school districts. The money being offered may not be sufficient to overcome the lure of the traditional summer break or to ask staff to work extra hours at the end of a regular school day.

One surprising finding was the significant number, 38.3%, of survey respondents indicating that professional development opportunities **were not** offered staff. This finding is surprising because DOE allowed and encouraged districts to offer professional development as part of the state-funded academic support services program grant. School districts should work with DOE to identify example of good professional development and to use funding for professional development to improve instruction and to offer teachers an additional incentive to work in academic support service programs.

IDENTIFYING EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Survey respondents expressed a strong interest in learning from the best practices of other school districts. DOE should identify program models that work and share these results with other school districts implementing state-funded academic support services programs.
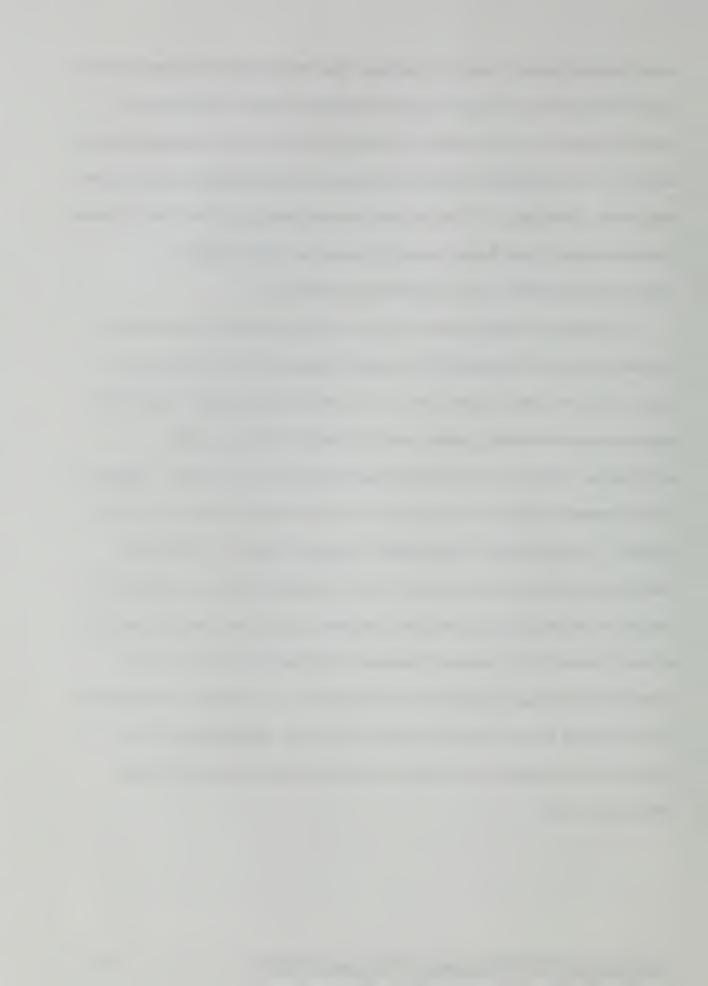
DOE has begun to do this by sponsoring a series of workshops throughout the state for school districts receiving funding in FY2000. In addition, more in-depth evaluation of specific programs should be conducted during the 1999-2000 school year. The evaluation should include a comparison of students who complete the program and similar students who either do not enroll or do not complete state-

funded academic support services programs. Such an analysis should provide some insight on both short and long-term gains of students enrolled in state-funded academic support services programs and the types of instructional strategies that are effective. The dissemination of this knowledge should be a main goal of DOE in the year ahead. Developing a "tool kit" of effective instructional practices should improve the effectiveness of state-funded academic support services programs.
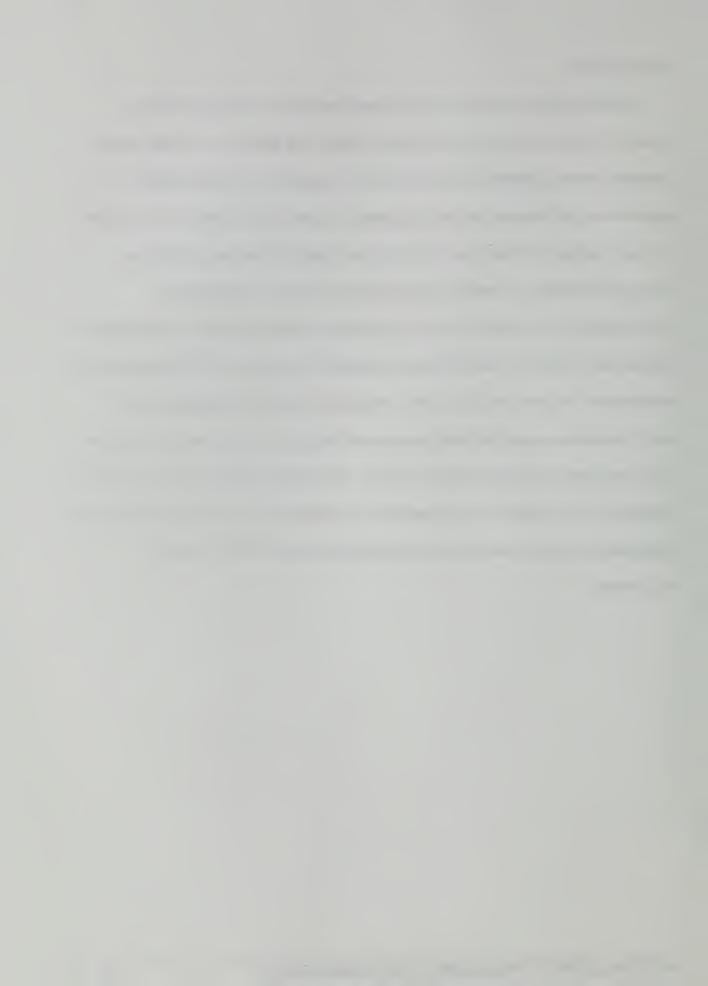
PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH FOLLOW-UP SERVICES

One danger of grant-funded programs is that they become another add-on program and are not integrated into the regular academic program of the school district. Thus, one area of improvement is the need to better integrate state-funded academic support services programs with other efforts to improve student performance. Better provisions for follow-up services need to be made so that state-funded academic support services programs are not viewed as a one shot deal for students. This might require more flexibility in program design to allow school districts to experiment with other ways to deliver remedial services to students. The line-item is very specific as to the types of academic support services programs that will be funded by DOE. However, there may indeed be other ways to provide students with remedial instruction and these may be just as effective. Consideration should be made to use some of the state funds for other remedial services not currently funded, especially services that could be employed during the regular school day or year.
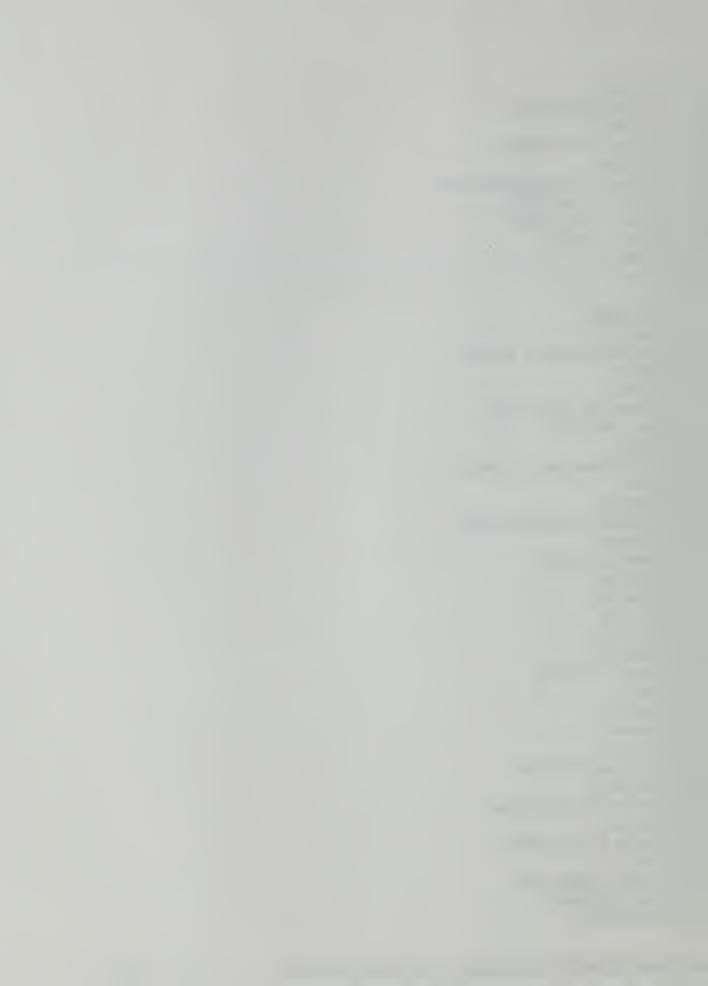
State funding for academic support services allowed school districts to implement a new kind of program during the 1998-1999 school year. State funds provided a strong incentive for school districts to implement, for the first time, academic support services programs targeted to those students most in need. Like any new program, a lot was learned during the program's first year. Continued funding of this program, however, depends upon DOE and school officials demonstrating to policymakers and taxpayers alike that the students most in need of services are in fact being served and that programs are effective in improving student performance. The next step is to take a critical look at the effectiveness of state-funded academic support services programs in the light of student performance data and to learn from examples of best practices. The ultimate goal should be to identify effective programs that provide low performing students with remedial assistance and helping school districts integrate such strategies into their plans for school improvement.
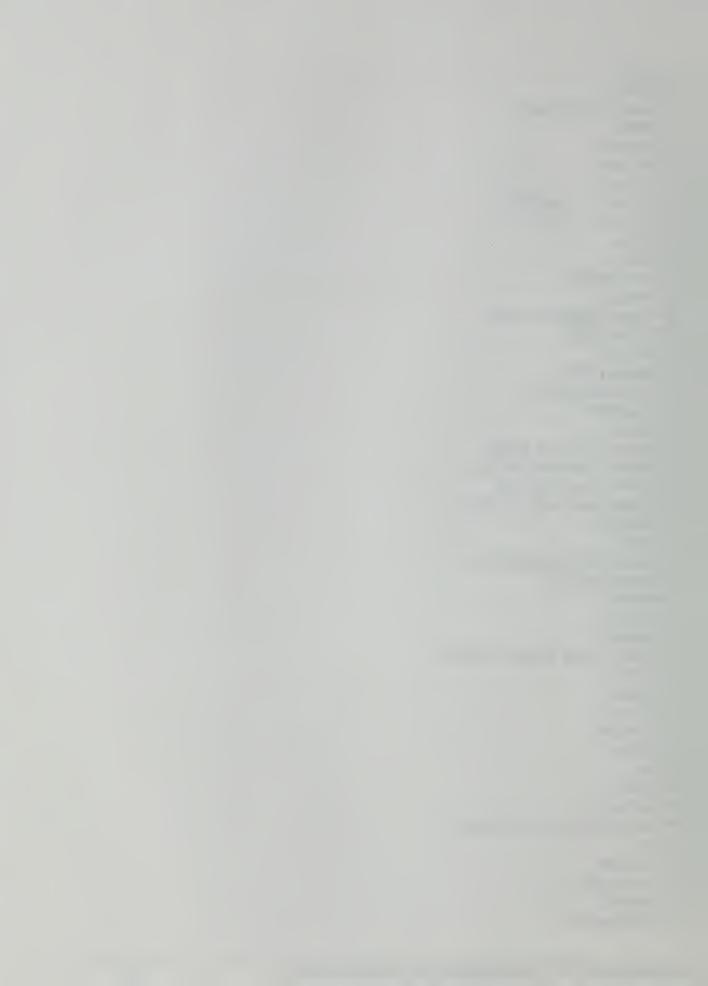
Appendix A
School districts receiving state-funded academic support services grants in FY99
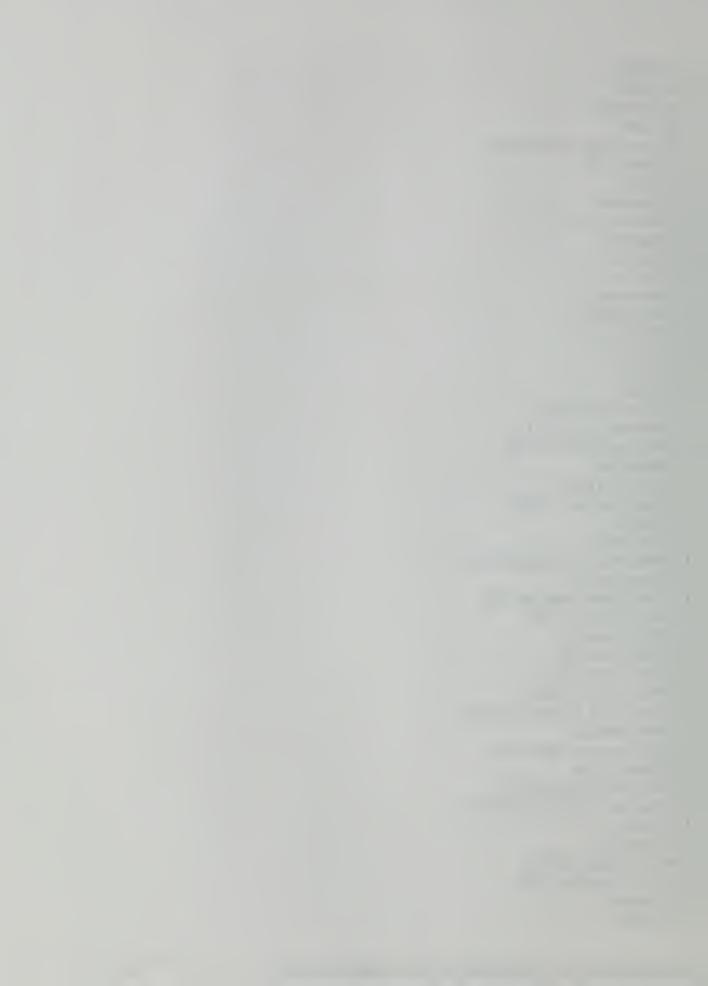
1	Abington
2	Adams-Cheshire RSD
3	Amherst
4	Amherst-Pelham RSD
5	Arlington
6	Ashburham-Westminister RSD
7	Assabet Valley RVSD
8	Athol-Royalston RSD
9	Atlantis Charter
10	Attleboro
11	Auburn
12	Ayer
13	Barnstable
14	Bedford
15	Benjamin Banneker Charter
16	Berkley
17	Billerica
18	Blackstone Valley RVSD
19	Blue Hills RTSD
20	Boston
21	Boston Renaissance Charter
22	Bourne
23	Braintree
24	Bridgewater-Raynham RSD
25	Brimfield
26	Bristol County Ag
27	Brockton
28	Brookfield
29	Brookline
30	Burlington
31	Cambridge
32	Cape Cod RVTHS
33	Carver
34	Chatham
35	Chelsea
36	Chicopee
37	City on a Hill Charter
38	Clarksburg
39	Community Day Charter
40	Danvers
41	Dennis-Yarmouth RSD
42	Dracut
43	Dudley-Charlton RSD
44	East Bridgewater
45	Easthampton

46	Erving
47	Essex
48	Essex Ag and Tech
49	Everett
50	Fairhaven
51	Fall River
52	Falmouth
53	Farmington River RSD
54	Fitchburg
55	Florida
56	Foxboro
57	Framingham
58	Franklin
59	Freetown-Lakeville RSD
60	Frontier RSD
61	Gardner
62	Gateway RSD
63	Gill-Montague RSD
64	Gloucester
65	Granby
66	Greater Fall River RVSD
67	Greater Lawrence RVTHS
68	Greater Lowell RVTHS
69	Greater New Bedford RVTSD
70	Greenfield
71	Hadley
72	Hampden-Wilbraham RSD
73	Hampshire RSD
74	Harwich
75	Hatfield
76	Haverhill
77	Health Career Academy HMCS
78	Holbrook
79	Holland
80	Holyoke
81	Hopedale
82	Hudson
83	Hull
84	Ipswich
85	Lawrence
86	Lawrence Family Dev Charter
87	Lee
88	Leicester
89	Leominister
90	Leverett
91	Longmeadow

92	Lowell
93	Ludlow
94	Lunenburg
95	Lynn
96	Lynn Community Charter
97	Mahar RSD
98	Malden
99	Mansfield
100	Marlborough
101	Masphee
102	Maynard
103	Medford
104	Methuen
105	Middleboro
106	Milford
107	Millbury
108	Millis
109	Milton
110	Minuteman RVTSD
111	Mohawk Trail RSD
112	Montachusett RVTHS
113	Nantucket
114	Nashoba RSD
115	Nashoba Valley THS
116	Natick
117	Nauset RSD
118	Neighborhood House Charter
119	New Bedford
120	New Salem-Wendell RSD
121	Norfolk County Ag
122	North Adams
123	North Andover
124	North Attleboro
125	North Shore RVSD
126	North Star Academy Charter
127	Northampton
128	Northampton-Smith Voc
129	Northbridge
130	Northeast Metro RVSD
131	Northern Berskshire RVSD
132	Norton
133	Norwood
134	Old Colony RVTSD
135	Old Rochester RSD
136	Orange
137	Oxford

138	Palmer
139	Pathfinder RVTSD
140	Peabody
141	Pioneer Valley RSD
142	Pittsfield
143	Provincetown
144	Quabog-West Brookfield RSD
145	Quincy
146	Randolph
147	Reading
148	Revere
149	Rockland
150	Sabis International Charter
151	Salem
152	Saugus
153	Scituate
154	Seekonk
155	Shawseen Valley RVTS
156	Shirley
157	Shutesbury
158	Silver Lake RSD
159	So. Boston Harbor Academy Charter
160	Somerset
161	Somerville
162	Sommerville International Charter
163	South Hadley
164	South Middlesex RVTSD
165	South Shore RVTSD (DID NOT IMPLEMENT)
166	Southbridge
167	Southeastern RVTSD
168	Southern Worcester RVTS
169	Southren Berkshire RSD
170	Southwick/Tolland RSD
171	Spencer-East Brookfield RSD
172	Springfield
173	Stoneham (READING ONLY)
174	Sturbridge
175	Sutton
176	Swampscott
177	Tantasqua RSD
178	Taunton
179	Tewksbury
180	Tri-County RVTSD
181	Triton RSD
182	Upper Cape Cod RVTSD
183	Wales

184	Waltham
185	Ware
186	Wareham
187	Watertown
188	Wayland
189	Webster
190	West Boylston (DID NOT IMPLEMENT)
191	West Springfield
192	Westboro
193	Western Mass Hilltown COOP (READING ONLY)
194	Westfield
195	Westford
196	Westport
197	Weymouth
198	Whitman-Hanson RSD
199	Whittier RVTHS
200	Wilmington
201	Winchedon
202	Winthrop
203	Woburn
204	Worcester

**Appendix B
Survey instrument**

Appendix C
Site visits conducted during the summer of 1999

SITE VISITS CONDUCTED
July and August 1999

- Brockton Public Schools, Brockton High School

- Cambridge Public Schools, Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School

- Haverhill Public Schools, Constentino Middle School

- Lowell Public Schools, Murkland Public School (elementary) and Varnum Public School (elementary)

- Lynn Public Schools, Lynn Classical High School

- New Bedford Public Schools, Roosevelt Junior High School

- Somerville Public Schools, Somerville High School

- Taunton Public Schools, Taunton High School

- Worcester Public Schools, Clark Street School (elementary), Worcester East Middle School

Appendix D
Site visit interview protocol

1. What are the goals for the program? How were the goals established and who had input in establishing the goals? How do the program's goals relate to the school district's improvement plan? How are the goals communicated to staff, students, parents, and others? How do you monitor progress toward meeting the program's goals?

2. How were students selected for the program? How was the program advertised and promoted among students, parents, teachers, and principals? How have you used incentives to encourage students to participate in the program? If a student "drops out" what happens to either bring the student back into the program or filling the spot with another student? What are the consequences for students who do not complete the program?

3. How were staff selected and trained for the program? What incentives were offered staff to participate in the program? What professional development opportunities have been offered to staff? How are staff recording and evaluating what they learn as they provide instructional services to student? How will this information be shared with other teaching staff?

4. How will students be recognized for completing the program? What information will students and parents be given about the academic progress made by the student? What plans have been made for follow-up with students once the program is completed? How will information about the student's progress be shared with the student's teacher(s) during the next academic year (1999/2000)?

5. What role has senior school-district management played in the development, implementation, and management of the program? Has the school committee adopted any policies or provided additional resources to support the program? Has senior management/school committee requested an evaluation of the program? If so, how will the evaluation be reported?

6. How have you motivated students to participate and "stick with" the program? How have you identified student needs and recorded and reported student progress? How have students who are falling behind in the program identified and provided additional help? How have you addressed any special education needs a student might have?

7. How have you prepared to teach in the program? What input did you have in the setting the program's goals and in the design and development of the program? How much planning time have you had with your colleagues to prepare for the program and what opportunities do you have for continuous planning and professional development during the implementation period? What role will you play in the evaluation of the program?

8. How was the instructional method developed for this program? What changes have been made since the program began? How are different learning needs

accommodated? How does this instructional method differ from those employed during the regular school year?

9.   How do you communicate academic progress to students and parents? Will you report student progress to the student's teacher(s) in the 1999/2000 academic year? If so, how? What changes have you seen in students—or that you expect to see—by successfully completing this program?

10.   Will you have an opportunity to share what you have learned in this program about student learning with other teachers and administrative staff in the school district? Do you feel this program supports the school district's improvement plan?